Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Photo Credits

Executive Summary i

1.0 Introduction 1
- 1.1 The Project 1
- 1.2 Purpose 2
- 1.3 The Study Area 2
- 1.4 Approach 3
- 1.5 Format of Report 3

2.0 Competing Development Scenarios 4
- 2.1 Key Development Assets 5
- 2.2 Development Scenarios 6
  - 2.2.1 Maintaining the Status Quo 7
  - 2.2.2 Redevelopment 7
  - 2.2.3. Redirecting New Development 7
  - 2.2.4. Heritage, Rehabilitation and Infill Development 8
- 2.3 Charting a Different Course 9

3.0 Synthesis 12
- 3.1 Experience from Elsewhere 12
  - 3.1.1 Process 12
  - 3.1.2 Financial Investment 12
  - 3.1.3 Administration/Regulation 13
  - 3.1.4 Information 14
- 3.2 Economic Importance of Historic Downtown 15
  - 3.2.1 Renovation Investment 15
  - 3.2.2 Employment 15
  - 3.2.3 Municipal Taxes and Property Values 15
  - 3.2.4 Tourism 16
  - 3.2.5 Retail Trade 17
  - 3.2.6 Residential Stability 17
  - 3.2.7 Civic Amenity, Visual Character and Quality of Life 17
  - 3.2.8 Environment 18
- 3.3 The St. John's Heritage Industry 18
  - 3.3.1 Industry Preparedness 18
  - 3.3.2 Market Readiness 19
- 3.4 Public Consultation 20
- 3.5 Planning Process 21

2008-05766/

4.0 Built Heritage - Threats and Opportunities 22
4.1 View Line Considerations 22
4.2 Opportunities for Developing Class A Office Space 29
4.3 Utilizing Upper Storeys - Duckworth and Water Streets 31
4.4 Utilizing the Waterfront 32
4.5 George Street Streetscape - Entertainment Centre 37
4.6 Heritage Church Structures Downtown 39

5.0 Vision 40
5.1 Acknowledging and Building on Assets 40
5.2 Building on Investor Confidence 40
5.3 Building Public Confidence 41
5.4 Commitment to Best Practices 41
5.5 Application to Strategic Objectives 42
5.6 The Vision 43
5.6.1 Rehabilitation and Conversions 45
5.6.2 New Development Through Infill 45
5.6.3 Re-inventing the Harbourfront 46

6.0 Achieving the Vision 48
6.1 Adopting the Vision 48
6.2 Bringing Supply and Demand Together 49
6.2.1 The Presentation 49
6.2.2 The Delivery 50
6.3 Improving Demand 50
6.3.1 The Office Sector 50
6.3.2 The Residential Sector 51
6.3.3 The Retail Sector 52
6.3.4 The Governmental and Institutional Sectors 52
6.4 Mobilizing the Heritage Industry 55
6.5 Developing Superior Know-How 55
6.5.1 Informing Individual Consumers 56
6.5.2 Informing Investors/Developers 57
6.5.3 Informing Contractors and Trades 57
6.6 Reducing Disincentives 58
6.6.1 Fears of Red Tape 58
6.6.2 Fears of Spiralling Taxes 59
6.7 Reducing Risk 60
6.7.1 High-Profile City Declarations of Intent 60
6.7.2 Encouraging Developers and Investors to Move in Packs 60
6.8 Demystifying Heritage Protection 61
6.9 Maintaining a Stock of Affordable Housing 62
6.10 Capitalizing on Urban Archaeology 63
6.11 Building Stakeholder Cooperation 63
Host a Downtown Summit 65
6.12 Review Historic District 65
6.13 Links with other Cities 65

7.0 Summary of Recommendations 66
7.1 Urban Planning 67
7.2 Physical Development 68
7.3 Investment 68
7.4 Administration 69
7.5 Information 70

Appendices

1. Study Terms of Reference
2. Current City Heritage Strategy
3. View Line Analysis and the Creation of New Office Space
4. Heritage Rehabilitation/Infill - examples
5. The Calgary Connection
6. The North Sea Connection

Background Reports

Background Report No. 1: Case Study Analysis

Background Report No. 2: Key Issues and Challenges

Background Report No. 3: Economic Benefits of Built Heritage Revival

Background Report No. 4: Summary of Public Consultations

Executive Summary

The City of St. John's has reached a crossroads. Over the next decade, economic growth fueled by growing petroleum and tourism industries offer the prospect for a vibrant and prosperous urban economy. While economic expansion can ensure a vibrant Downtown, growth must be managed and directed to maximize social and economic benefits. Can oil and economic prosperity co-operate with heritage? If so, what kind of Downtown would that produce?

This Strategy has been prepared for the City of St. John's and its stakeholders to provide direction for the future development of the Downtown. Its preparation stems from growing development pressure on Downtown properties, increased interest in the Downtown as an attractive place to live, work and visit, and a strong desire to preserve the City's heritage - its built environment, culture and townscape fabric.

Background reports prepared for this study show that the economic benefits of re-using our built heritage are significant:

- Since 1986 Downtown property owners have invested close to $72 million in residential and non-residential property renovations.

- Excluding major restoration projects, during 2000 over $10 million was invested in basic heritage-type work in the City, the majority of which occurred in the Downtown.

- These investment activities currently support 200 jobs in the St. John's Census Metropolitan Area.

- Between 1996 and 1999, residential realty assessment in the study area increased by approximately $17 million, with the traditional Downtown accounting for over 90 per cent of this increase in assessed value.

- Downtown St. John's is now an 'attraction' in itself for most visitors to the City. In 1998, the 258,872 out-of-province visitors who came to the City spent an estimated $95.9 million in the St. John's region.

- All of the Bed and Breakfast establishments in the Downtown are located in heritage buildings. In 1999, revenues generated by this accommodation sector contributed an estimated $2.5 million to the City's economy.

- The heritage character of Downtown St. John's makes it an attractive location for film and video activities. The ten-year (1995-2005) value of film industry production expenditures which can be attributed solely to the civic amenity of Downtown St. John's is estimated at $13.5 million.

- The majority of the 655 arts and cultural sector workers in St. John's live and work in the Downtown area. Over the next decade their activities will contribute $2.4 million

annually to the City's economy.

The lessons to be learned from other places which have embraced a heritage ethic are clear:

> **Economic development can co-exist with heritage and can be mutually complementary, with sound city planning, a nurturing of investor confidence and a knowledgeable heritage renovation sector. Strong, committed and visible municipal leadership is essential.**

Acknowledging and building on the City's key assets are the basis for a new vision for the Downtown. The enhancement, revitalization and intelligent re-use of buildings, the socio-cultural resources; community fabric and quality of life, are recognized and accepted as the building blocks of this strategy for economic growth.

The Vision of Downtown St. John's is:

1. An internationally recognized, historical, old port city in which residents, businesses and visitors are welcome;
2. Desirable residential neighbourhoods, with fully rehabilitated housing stock, looking as attractive as its original builders intended;
3. An unforgettable commercial core featuring authentic traditional buildings, well conserved and rehabilitated, which create a highly competitive retail sector along Water and Duckworth Streets;
4. A desirable office/commercial location, with a solid supply of Class A and Class B office space to meet the needs and expectations of the corporate community;
5. Low-rise buildings which do not obstruct the irreplaceable views of the Harbour;
6. A vibrant entertainment area centered on George Street;
7. A revitalized, pedestrian-friendly harbourfront;
8. A "people place" which forms the soul of the city – *where it all began and continues.*

Achieving the Vision

The background studies and comparative analysis show that this vision is feasible, attractive ***and*** profitable. It can be achieved by building upon the existing momentum of investment in heritage renovation, and encouraging the

- ❑ Rehabilitation of existing buildings;
- ❑ Conversion of some buildings to new uses;
- ❑ Creation of new complementary buildings through well-designed infill; and
- ❑ Re-invention of the Harbourfront.

However, investor confidence is key and steps must be taken to convince them that the City is committed to achieving the vision.

The recommendations for action include:

- ❑ Incorporating the Vision for the Future of the Downtown into the City's Municipal Plan;
- ❑ Sharing the Vision for the Downtown with all stakeholders;
- ❑ Marketing the Vision for the Downtown to the corporate sector which can be enticed to locate here;
- ❑ Conducting a viewline analysis to identify and establish appropriate development height constraints which maximise streetscape and harbour views;
- ❑ Removing disincentives to heritage renovation;
- ❑ Providing information, training and marketing expertise to consumers, investors, developers, managers, and contractors and trades, so that with the right know-how, these stakeholders can help implement the City's vision;
- ❑ Establishing a Downtown-partnership to discuss issues, to help manage change and to monitor progress and development activity;
- ❑ Empowering the public in creating a sustainable vision for planning in the downtown;
- ❑ Preparing a plan for a more dynamic, pedestrian-friendly Harbourfront; and
- ❑ Encouraging linkages with other heritage cities.

The Study Team believes that this is a worthy and economically sound vision for the City. Together, the recommended measures are intended to produce one of the finest urban centres anywhere – and one which resonates to the pride and identity of the people of St. John's, and of the Province as a whole.

The strategy does not commit the City of St. John's to complicated new administrative structures; nor to vast new expenditures. Most of the policy framework, planning techniques and marketing and development tools are readily available, by adapting those which have proven to be successful in many other jurisdictions. In short, the City can begin the implementation process immediately.

1.0 Introduction

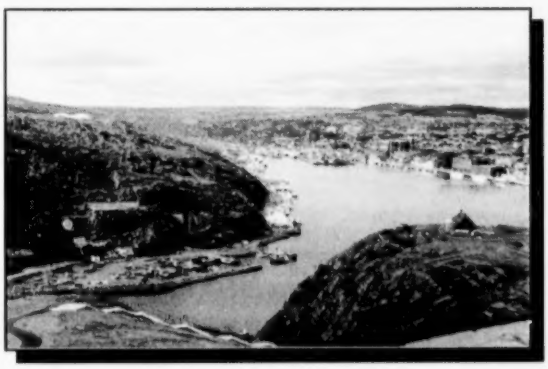
1.1 The Project

The Downtown area of St. John's has a unique physical character, reflected in the layout of its streets, the short distance to the Harbour, the design of commercial buildings and houses, and the close relationship between its built and natural environments.

Major 19th-century fires devastated the City and post-fire reconstructions resembled the pre-fire scale of construction and use of traditional building materials. Post-World War II growth has led to significant changes: residential areas have expanded to the suburbs (inside and beyond the City's boundaries); the Downtown population has decreased; many retailers are now in the suburban shopping malls; some Downtown office complexes are out of scale with neighbouring buildings; the look of many neighbourhoods is homogenized by the use of non-traditional building materials; and important historical landmarks (buildings and houses) have been destroyed.

Today however, there is renewed interest in Downtown St. John's. More businesses are locating Downtown and as a result, the retail vacancy rate has dropped. New developments such as the Civic Centre (Mile One Stadium) and Convention Centre will provide added employment and business activity in the Downtown. Restoration of heritage buildings for housing and continued renovation of existing homes has increased property values.

Faced with prospects for increased development from an improving economy fuelled by the offshore oil and gas and tourism industries, the City recognized the need to develop a strategy to guide development in the historic Downtown. A steering committee, composed of representatives from business, community groups and government agencies was formed to oversee the preparation of a study and to make recommendations to St. John's City Council (see Appendix 1). The consulting firm of Canning & Pitt Associates, Inc. was hired to lead the Study Team which would work with the Steering Committee to prepare the strategy. In addition to Canning and Pitt Associates, other members of the Team include Sheppard Case Inc., of St. John's, and two Ottawa-based experts in the area of heritage resource conservation and heritage law, Dr. John Weiler and Mr. Marc Denhez.



1.2 Purpose

This study has three key objectives:

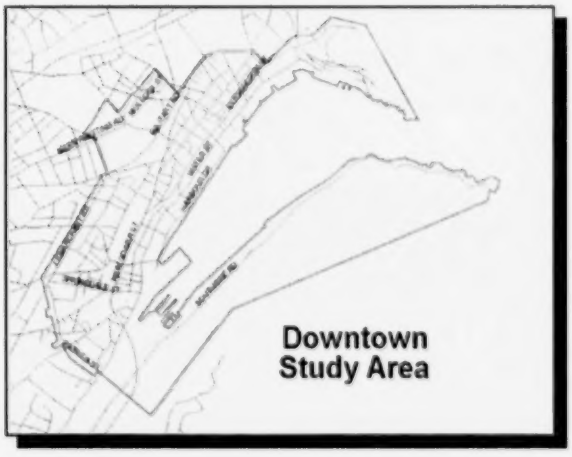
- To identify the particular areas of Downtown St. John's where economic development and building restoration has occurred, and to determine the factors which made this possible.
- To demonstrate, on economic, demographic, cultural, and environmental grounds, why the built heritage of Downtown St. John's should be preserved and/or reused.
- To develop a strategy to guide the City of St. John's, in co-operation with the provincial and federal governments, the private sector, and non-profit groups, in optimizing the historical character and scale of Downtown St. John's while encouraging new, sustainable economic activity (i.e. more businesses, more livyers, and more cultural, entertainment, and recreational opportunities).

The consultants have been asked to recommend a Strategy which will encourage diversity and growth in Downtown land uses and activities while respecting heritage character. In the long term, the desired result is sustainable heritage preservation, re-use of older buildings, and compatible new development.

The Strategy answers the question: "What is the best approach for developing a vibrant, diversified, competitive and sustainable "downtown environment" while maintaining those aspects which give the City

1.3 The Study Area

The boundary of the Study Area, as defined in the Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) and shown in Map 1, incorporates the Downtown business core and most of the Downtown residential neighbourhoods.



Map 1.

1.4 Approach

Research and consultations have been conducted during the course of preparing this report and have concentrated on four main areas:

- ***Issues Scoping*** - Familiarization with issues of economic activity and heritage in Downtown St. John's, development trends, and key questions and issues to be addressed.
- ***Case Studies*** - Comparison of Downtown St. John's with other jurisdictions which have dealt with similar heritage, economic and development issues to identify critical factors and "best practices".
- ***Benefits Identification*** - Identification, analysis and quantification of the *economic, demographic, cultural,* and *environmental* benefits of retaining the city's built heritage, and assessment of the factors which affect Downtown revitalization.
- ***Public Consultation*** - Consultations with the public through a one-day Heritage Forum (in March 2000), acceptance of written briefs, a questionnaire (administered at the Forum) as well as meetings and correspondence with the Steering Committee and various groups, business organizations and individuals with a specific interest in the Downtown area.

The results of these study research activities were presented in four separate Background Reports and comprise an integral part of the overall study findings.

1.5 Format of Report

This report is organized in seven sections:

- Chapter 1. Introduction
- Chapter 2. Key issues and questions related to the future development of Downtown St. John's
- Chapter 3. Findings and conclusions from the research and study consultations
- Chapter 4. An assessment of built heritage resources and potential physical (re)development
- Chapter 5. A new vision for the Downtown development, and the principles and strategic objectives which would guide the future development within the area
- Chapter 6. Outlines the methods by which the vision can be achieved; and
- Chapter 7 A summary of recommendations.

2.0 Competing Development Scenarios

It has often proven difficult to reach a consensus on what constitutes a better future for Downtown St. John's. What some define as "progress", others see as a step backwards. Among the many debates concerning what constitutes a "better Downtown St. John's" none have elicited these contradictory perspectives more strongly than the long-standing one which has placed those who favoured heritage and those who supported redevelopment in different, and competing, camps.

Two important considerations underlie the mandate of this study:

- **Oil Development Potential** - The City of St. John's is on the threshold of significant economic growth and expansion fuelled primarily by development activities associated with the Province's offshore petroleum sector. The City's proximity to offshore petroleum resources, the quality of its educational and research facilities, and other factors, make St. John's an excellent location for new business investment. There are high - and well-founded - expectations that the City can develop as the 'oil capital' of Eastern Canada.

- **Amenity Value** - The City's heritage resources and fabric, its physical setting and topography, its safe urban environment and cultural dynamic, significantly enhance the attractiveness of St. John's as a location for economic activities, new business investment, and a growing tourism industry. This attractiveness is due in part to a perception and appreciation of the character, uniqueness and image of the City.

The Study Team was asked to recommend a strategy which

- Pays due attention to preserving the character (and hence, in part, the heritage fabric) of the Downtown while
- Ensuring sustainable development of the City's economy.

Given these two seemingly opposing considerations, the key questions which any Downtown strategy must address are:

Can commerce, community and heritage co-exist in harmony?
and
Does the City have to make a choice between one or the other?

The key issues and challenges for future development of the Downtown are described and discussed in Background Report No. 2., and are briefly outlined below.

2.1 Key Development Assets

There are five key assets upon which the City will build its economic future. These are:

1. Oil - offshore petroleum and related activities
2. Visual - physical setting and attractiveness of the City
3. Historic - the historic fabric and character of the built environment;
4. Community - the socio-cultural fabric and sense of community; and
5. The City's role as the Province's Capital.

> ***"To keep growing, the city will have to expand and adapt to the needs of the new industry that prizes Class-A office space and quality condominiums. It also needs good transportation and infrastructure that keeps St. John's competitive. ... with other port cities. Just as importantly, the city needs to retain the very things that make it a unique and desirable place in which to live - pleasant neighbourhoods, green spaces, a sense of history and a willingness to preserve it. ... reconciling these interests will not be easy".***
>
> **Editorial, St. John's Evening Telegram**
> **5 August, 2000**

These assets are already strong forces in the City's development. Other aspects of the Downtown such as

- The current economic health, investment trends, social milieu, 'safeness' and general appearance of the Downtown core;
- The strength and vibrancy of the residential and social community; and
- Investment trends within, and appreciation of, the built heritage resources

are also important components upon which to build a strategy for the future. However, if the City chooses to rely exclusively on one of these assets to achieve economic growth, then the potential benefits of other assets could be substantially diminished through inappropriate development.

It is easy to imagine a scenario where this would occur. An extreme case would be a massive redevelopment of the old City into a high density, highrise zone in the name of new Class A office space, a more industrialized waterfront area, and wide highways through old neighbourhoods.

While heritage advocates might see the development of the City as an oil capital as a threat, this report suggests that oil-led economic growth presents a significant opportunity for enhancing the City's heritage resources.

In the past, there has been a tendency to view heritage properties as problems or long-term liabilities. This is especially the case where older buildings or areas have been poorly maintained. This report concludes that it is just as easy to see the City's built heritage as a significant asset; in other words, not as a problem which needs to be fixed, but as an undeveloped opportunity to be captured. Viewed in this light, the City's heritage legacy is also an economic resource - an active asset - in the same way that petroleum reserves are.

2.2 Development Scenarios

Within the broad issue of whether commerce, community and heritage can co-exist, there are several specific issues which will have a direct bearing on the future form of development in the Downtown. The anticipated demand for Class A office space in St. John's, the ever-increasing investment in Downtown residential neighbourhoods and the somewhat contradictory status of current heritage policy lead to the following questions:

Should the City stay the course with its existing heritage strategy?

In non-residential areas, will heritage give way to a Modern, highrise architecture/townscape?

Should development of new Class A office space be encouraged in the Downtown core, or located elsewhere?

Is there an alternative heritage/rehabilitation/ infill strategy?

In debating these questions, it is useful to describe the alternative development scenarios that could result, depending on which development course the City takes. Each of these scenarios has different, possibly competing, vision of a "future Downtown". These are

1. Maintaining the *Status Quo*
2. Redevelopment - An intensified office/commercial Downtown
3. Redirecting New Development - Certain types of economic activity and market demand directed to non-Downtown locations; and
4. Heritage, Rehabilitation and Infill Development - accommodate new uses within the existing built environment.

2.2.1 Maintaining the Status Quo

Maintaining the status quo is not a viable option. The existing strategy (see Appendix 2), particularly in the *non*-residential areas, has not yet produced enough success to *withstand* a serious alternative proposal to develop new, high density commercial office facilities in the Downtown core.

This leaves a choice between options 2,3 and/or 4.

2.2.2 Redevelopment

In the past, especially in North America, the typical choice has been to opt for redevelopment. The 1960s conventional wisdom held that redevelopment (i.e. replacement of older buildings with glass and steel highrises) was the natural course for prosperous cities. Cities which questioned that model, such as San Francisco, were the exception and not the rule. Although most major American cities abandoned this approach in the 1980s, many of them found that, by then, it was too late to change the image they had created for their downtowns.

Advocates of redevelopment hold that only this model can generate the best profit margins for all participants. From a property value perspective (versus a macro-economic one), many people still think this model is synonymous with progress. This perspective has been easy to maintain in situations where the buildings being replaced were considered ugly. This perspective has often been further reinforced in downtowns in which a large number of the older buildings were not maintained, or rehabilitated. (The King George V Institute building in St. John's was an example of such a case).

This scenario would

- Require a substantial redevelopment of the Downtown's commercial and Harbourfront areas;
- Sound the death-knell of many commercial and institutional heritage properties;
- Impair the views from many areas within the residential Downtown, thereby undermining the economic impetus for investment in such areas; and
- Result in a significant loss of personal investment and municipal revenue, e.g. through a drop in residential property values, reduced tourism and residential expenditures in the City, and in the Downtown in particular.

2.2.3. Redirecting New Development

In this scenario, new Class A office (or industrial)space would be directed *elsewhere,* away from the Downtown. While it might address some heritage conservation issues and concerns, such an approach is not without its potential pitfalls.

This scenario would seek to achieve what some of the world's most prestigious cities - e.g. London and Paris - have managed to accomplish, namely to have *two downtowns*. Such communities have two separate and distinct downtown areas:

- a *traditional* downtown whose 'prestige' space includes palatial baroque offices with 14-ft. ceilings, and
- a *modern* downtown with Class A space on the typical North American (e.g. Dallas-type) model.

In cities where this two-track development strategy has been successful, it has been well received by *all* segments of the corporate community, especially since it permits the accommodation of two different types, or images, of prestige space.

However, striking the right balance is not easy. Experience elsewhere shows that once Class A space starts to migrate to the suburbs, it is hard to prevent a downward spiral in the central core (similar to what happened in the City's Downtown commercial core during the 1960s and 1970s when businesses moved to the new suburban shopping malls).

In a two-track scenario, not only is it difficult to control the *amount* of activity that is redirected, it is also difficult to control its ultimate *destination*. In the case of St. John's, if the City acquires a reputation (within corporate circles) of treating developers and head offices as unwelcome, development might shift beyond the City's boundaries altogether.

2.2.4. Heritage, Rehabilitation and Infill Development

This scenario involves a combination of heritage conservation, rehabilitation and appropriate new infill. In Scotland, where rates of growth are comparable to Newfoundland, this model for Downtown development has been successful. After decades of economic stagnation, the country has enjoyed a windfall from offshore oil - similar to the one which Newfoundland is now anticipating.

In Scotland, petrodollars were channelled into rehabilitation and infill. Edinburgh and Glasgow now have magnificently rehabilitated downtowns and residential districts (See Appendix 6). Glasgow - once presumed to be beyond hope - is now so completely transformed that it was declared a top cultural destination for European tourists. Aberdeen is also an excellent example of how heritage and oil can work hand in hand. This city has been the focus of offshore oil investment for over two decades.

Downtown Aberdeen, Scotland

The heritage, rehabilitation and infill development scenario can only be successful if

- The area is *physically capable* of bringing new space on stream (via rehabilitation, conversion and/or infill), to meet a growing demand for Class A and Class B office space;
- The area can bring *enough* space on stream to guarantee an ongoing major corporate presence Downtown, and thus minimize or avoid an exodus to outlying areas;
- Space can be developed and sold/leased at *competitive market rates*; and
- The space developed *appeals* to the prospective clientele.

If the heritage/rehabilitation/infill model is to *compete effectively* with the redevelopment scenario, it must be *structured to meet the above objectives on a competitive basis.*

2.3 Charting a Different Course

There is a strong desire to see St. John's develop as the oil capital of Eastern Canada. It is also reasonable to suggest that petroleum-driven economic growth need not be in competition with other equally valid opportunities for economic expansion. Continued development of the City's economy is linked to future growth of tourism activities, investment in the commercial retail sector, the conservation and rehabilitation of its cultural heritage resources and the maintenance of its physical/townscape fabric.

Because decisions for one sector can have significant implications for another, prudence and logic demands avoiding single-track growth strategies. The best approach would see the City using major engines of growth - such as petroleum activities - in conjunction with other key economic resources and opportunities - to generate prosperity, a sustainable economic future for the entire City and, in the process, a commercially diversified, attractive and vibrant Downtown.

If the above approach was adopted successfully, the result would be not only an accommodation of oil development in the St. John's *economy*, but also an economically competitive pattern of lowrise development, i.e. not one which required a high density form of redevelopment within its *Downtown.* Such a strategy would be based on the premise that it is possible *to have one's cake and eat it too.*

While growth of oil-related activities in St. John's is obviously related to the excellent prospects of petroleum resources - 200 miles offshore, it is also further enhanced by the heritage resources, streetscapes, distinctive fabric of the non-residential core, and to the transformed residential neighbourhoods, that are located

Given the unique physical structure of St. John's, the extensive heritage resources within its Downtown residential and non-residential districts, and the desire to expand and develop its economy and achieve prosperity for all of its citizens, any strategy which embodies such a scenario requires serious consideration. The Study Team explored this prospect not only with local experts, but also with individuals who are most knowledgeable of the needs of the oil patch - namely real estate experts from Calgary (See Appendix 5).

For example, although some of the potential demand for new office and commercial retail space can be met by low to medium-rise infill construction, this may not go very far. Though there is some vacant land in the Downtown core of St. John's, if a heritage-based rehabilitation model is to be effective and successful, several important matters will have to be addressed:

- The business community would have to be shown – in graphic and concrete terms – *how* it can create and enjoy "prestige" space in converted heritage buildings;
- The *taste* (i.e. buyer appreciation) for that kind of prestige space would need to be nurtured;
- The *skills* to bring such spaces on stream would need to be developed, and mobilized;
- Public sector owners and managers would need to be persuaded that governments can be part of the solution instead of the problem;
- The ecclesiastical/institutional sector must be shown how it can join with other sectors to capitalize on its own heritage buildings; and finally
- All of the above requires direct and ongoing contact with the business and governmental communities on a scale not previously undertaken in St. John's.

Of course, these investors will still require the Class A office space, the Harbourfront facilities and the heavier industrial areas they need to develop and manage their activities. There exists a tremendous opportunity for St. John's to do something entirely different based on its prospects and potential to develop as the unique oil capital of the east.

Is it possible to devise a "win-win" scenario which clearly demonstrates that the heritage conservation/ rehabilitation option is not only more *meritorious*, but also capable of achieving the desired objectives and economic outcomes in a more effective, competitive, manner?

How can St. John's, acting as a community, determine whether this scenario is the best one and decide how it could be achieved?

- By examining the success stories from other jurisdictions and identifying best practices and models for downtown development;
- By realizing the economic importance of the heritage resources within its Downtown area; and
- By asking citizens, business and other groups for their expectations, views and ideas about the future of the Downtown.

The following chapters describe the results of these investigations and provide a background for the vision and recommendations in support of a heritage/rehabilitation/infill model, which follow in the final chapters of this report.

The Steering Committee and the consulting team have challenged the notion that economic growth and heritage are incompatible, and have accepted that the best strategy is one which allows the City to maximize the benefits of developing all of its potential

3.0 Synthesis

In addition to an examination of the issues facing development in Downtown St. John's discussed in Chapter 2, the following research and analysis was undertaken in preparing this strategy and is summarized and discussed in this chapter:

- Case study analysis of economic development and heritage preservation strategies elsewhere (*Background Report No. 1*);
- Assessment of the economic importance of Downtown of St. John's (*Background Report No. 3*); and
- Public consultations held through a one day Heritage Forum, written submissions, meetings and interviews (*Background Report No. 4*).

A number of assumptions and conclusions that have been drawn from the research are also presented which provide a rationale for the Vision and how it can be achieved.

3.1 Experience from Elsewhere

Case studies of economic development and heritage preservation in Canadian cities and elsewhere were prepared to illustrate how cities are using heritage preservation to revitalize Downtown development and to discover best practices and approaches which could be incorporated into a St. John's Economic Development and Heritage Preservation Strategy. Detailed discussion of approaches in other jurisdictions is contained in *Background Report No. 1 Case Study Analysis*. The key lessons learned from experience are described below.

3.1.1 Process

- *Leadership* - Successful strategic plans require active participation and leadership of City Councils involving a process of buy-in on the part of key stakeholders and the citizenry at large, as well as prospective private sector partners.

- *Public participation* - is an essential component in strategic planning for Downtown revitalization.

3.1.2 Financial Investment

- *Public Commitment* - While private sector investment and investor confidence in the rehabilitation market are increasingly important to successful urban regeneration in North America, experience in other jurisdictions shows that market forces are not sufficient on their own. Some form of public or non-profit organization incentive or inducement, coupled with sensible regulatory measures to protect the public interest, is usually necessary, at least in the beginning.

- *Regulatory and Program Reform* - Removal of disincentives inherent in the City planning system and in administrative structures and processes is often a strategy of making choices, accompanied by financial and other inducements for conservation/rehabilitation. Non-financial mechanisms are also worth "real money" and may include such measures as flexible and bonus zoning provisions, exemption from development fees or parking requirements, training, proactive initiatives with prospective investors or fast-track approvals.

- *Matching Supply and Demand* - Successful downtown revitalization strategies bring supply together with demand. This requires knowledge and awareness of how the supply and demand side can find out about each other, and how the supply side can present its product in the most attractive way possible. The process can be jump-started where there are:
  (a) buyers and tenants who know how attractive heritage spaces can become;
  (b) marketers who know how to market heritage in a professional and expert manner; and
  (c) entrepreneurs who have technical understanding of how to rehabilitate properties.

- *Financial Incentives* - Indirect financial incentives in the form of tax relief (especially for property tax) are being increasingly adopted in North America, either to replace or to complement direct incentives (grants and loans).

- *Infrastructure* - Investment in public infrastructure (roads, streetscape improvements, etc.) is an important inducement to heritage preservation, downtown revitalization and economic development.

- *Marketing and Promotion* - Retail business associations with a primary mandate to boost downtown activities are increasingly involved in the marketing and promotion of downtown development through initiatives such as the preparation of information portfolios, print literature and electronic media (including Internet web sites), cost-sharing street scaping projects and building partnerships with key stakeholders. Many business associations support development of historic downtown public markets (farmers markets) which provide a springboard for many marketing, promotion and educational opportunities.

3.1.3 Administration/Regulation

- *Designated Heritage Buildings/Areas* - Downtown Development Strategies often distinguish between several categories of targeted properties:
  - Legally designated heritage buildings and areas;
  - Buildings/areas of character that may be eligible for heritage designation;
  - "Older" building stock that has an economic use or potential for adaptive re-use; and

- Compatible new construction and urban design that support the historical nature of a locale.

Usually, a clear distinction is made between legally designated heritage properties and other existing structures. This is because the former are subject to regulatory measures (which have economic effects) that the others are not.

- ❑ *Regulatory Measures* - to protect built heritage in employ as a method of choice, statutory and local by-law instruments to designate historic districts. In Canada this varies greatly depending on the province concerned.

- ❑ *Development Agreements* - Heritage revitalization agreements between local authorities and property developers are a useful means of encouraging reinvestment. Specific packages of inducements create a greater degree of certainty for developers and the community.

- ❑ *Adaptive Re-Use Strategies (conversions)* - are enjoying a renaissance as a response to economic change that has resulted in the functional obsolescence of industrial, commercial and institutional buildings.

3.1.4 Information

- ❑ *Public Information* - Knowledge is the first step toward building investor confidence. In cities like Saint John, Quebec and Winnipeg, "how-to" publicity disseminated by these cities is credited not only with improving the quality of work, but also with demystifying heritage and the economics of intelligent rehabilitation.

- ❑ *Support to Rehabilitation Industry* - Measures to demystify commercial (heritage) rehabilitation are required. In Montreal and Ottawa, various entrepreneurs have acquired rehabilitation skills and know-how - but without any help, and often with great difficulty.
- ❑ *Educating Public Sector Managers* - Public sector asset managers have little training in heritage rehabilitation. Although there is an elaborate training system offered through the facilities management network, there is little to show public sector managers how to administer their older buildings, or how their agencies can lease older buildings in a way that can meet contemporary public sector needs.

- ❑ *Ongoing Research* - Information and advisory instruments such as "buildings at risk" surveys, vacant space inventories, and volunteer business support services, have proved especially beneficial for economic development and heritage preservation initiatives in downtown areas.

3.2 Economic Importance of Historic Downtown

How important is Downtown St. John's to the City's overall economy? The results of research on

various aspects of the local economy which rely on, and benefit from, the built heritage resources and related activities in the Downtown are presented in Background Report No. 3. The key findings are summarized below.

3.2.1 Renovation Investment

- Over and above special or unique restoration projects (such as Nolan & Hall's restoration of the Benevolent Irish Society Building), the estimated value of basic heritage-type work in the City for 2000 is over $10 million, for which the Downtown is the "flagship."
- Over the past 14 years renovation has comprised about 65% of all investment in Downtown construction and, since 1986, close to $72 million has been invested in residential and non-residential property renovations.

3.2.2 Employment

- 200 jobs are currently supported by basic heritage-type work (in primarily pre-1945 buildings) in the St. John's Census Metropolitan Area (CMA).
- Renovation creates a significantly greater amount of *direct* employment at the local level than identical investment in new construction.
- Total employment (direct, indirect via suppliers, and induced through related economic activity) is substantially higher for renovation compared to new construction, with a rate of job creation better than almost any other industry in Canada.

3.2.3 Municipal Taxes and Property Values

- Pre-1940 buildings account for 88% of all residential properties in Downtown St. John's.
- Between 1996 and 1999, residential realty assessment in the study area increased by approximately $17 million, and the traditional Downtown accounts for $15.4 million of the total.
- The inner city, which comprises the residential areas nearest the Harbour, accounted for 90% of this increase in assessed value.
- Six streets in which heritage activity has been highly visible outperformed their neighbours in the value of property transactions.
- Since the traditional Downtown and the inner-city are largely covered by legally designated heritage areas, the properties in heritage areas that have experienced

heritage-type renovation work or have been reasonably maintained have increased in value significantly.

- Since property values determine tax assessments, the increases which occurred during the period 1996-99 indicate that heritage-type renovation has contributed significantly to the net increase in the tax base of Downtown St. John's.
- In the ICI (Institutional/ Commercial/ Industrial) sector, the projected ten-year tax benefit to the City resulting from basic "heritage-type" work in Downtown buildings would be in excess of $250,000.
- Practically all of the rehabilitation work is *net* to the City's tax base, since this type of investment does not place any incremental demand on municipal infrastructure and services.

3.2.4 Tourism

- Downtown St. John's is now an attraction in itself for most visitors to the City.
- Between 1996 and 1998, tourism to the City of St. John's increased by 37.1%. In the latter year, 258,872 out-of-province visitors visited the City, spending an estimated $95.9 million in the St. John's region.
- St. John's is the first of the Province's top five attractions for non-resident automobile travellers; 64.4% of these visitors came to the City in 1997.
- One of the reasons St. John's is the primary destination for out-of-province visitors is its critical mass of cultural, historical and natural/scenic attractions.
- The unique culture and heritage of St. John's are essential ingredients in the marketing and promotion of the City by the Province and the Avalon Convention and Visitors Bureau. Built heritage is of critical importance as part of the product package being offered to tourists in St. John's.
- Accommodation provided by Downtown establishments trading on heritage is a good indicator of the contribution of heritage to tourism. Total direct and indirect revenues enjoyed by St. John's as a result of the sector in 1999 is estimated at $2.5 million.
- All of the Bed-and-Breakfast establishments in the Downtown are located in heritage properties.

3.2.5 Retail Trade

- Both the St. John's Downtown Development Commission and the St. John's Board of Trade indicate that the "image" of an historic built environment (accommodating

specialty shops together with cultural attractions and the view of the Harbour) is pivotal to the increased prosperity of Downtown.

- One indicator of increased prosperity is the rise in storefront occupancy rates to 90.9% on Water Street and 89.4% on Duckworth Street.

3.2.6 Residential Stability

- Although the population of Downtown had been in decline for two decades, the substantial growth in residential renovation in the period 1991 to 1999 has helped to stabilize the population base.
- While there is concern over the potential adverse effects of "gentrification" leading to the displacement or the pricing-out-of-the-market of livyers, there are encouraging signs that investors recognize the opportunities associated with the renovation of under-utilized or vacant upper floors in commercial properties to convert these spaces for residential-use and live/work units for home-based businesses.

3.2.7 Civic Amenity, Visual Character and Quality of Life

- According to the real estate community, new buyers of residential property in the Downtown are placing an estimated 15-40% premium on properties with a view. Analysis of recent (1996-1999) property sales data, and consultations with industry professionals, support this anecdotal information.
- A distinctive visual appeal can add to a community's competitiveness on an inter-regional and international basis, in the same way as "prestige" elicits a premium in the local real estate market. The City's promotional brochure, *St. John's: Where North America Begins*, highlights the role of heritage as part of the lure to lifestyle-conscious employers and their employees, and there is evidence that this has had a concrete impact on decisions of corporate managers to choose St. John's as a location.
- St. John's film and video industry production firms rank the ambience and amenity of Downtown St. John's as a primary reason for selecting the City as a 'location'. Industry participants estimate the current and future value of this unique attribute at 30% of anticipated production values. In 1998/99, this industry invested about $1.7 million as a direct result. The ten-year (1995-2005) value of film industry production expenditures which can be attributed solely to the civic amenity of Downtown St. John's is estimated at $13.5 million.

- St. John's is home to 655 arts and cultural sector workers, representing 55% of the Province's total. The majority of these persons live and work in the Downtown area. The St. John's arts industry and cultural community places a significant social and economic value on the ambience and character of the Downtown. Over the next ten years, the economic contribution of their cultural presence in the Downtown to the City's economy is calculated at $23.8 million (or, on a sustaining basis, at $2.4 million per year).

3.2.8 Environment

- Re-use of built heritage reduces the solid waste sent to the St. John's Robin Hood Bay landfill site. It is estimated that 30% of the total solid waste stream to this site is used construction material.
- When consumers decide to renovate, they usually include energy-efficient upgrades; these investment decisions reduce energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

3.3 The St. John's Heritage Industry

In Canada as a whole, St. John's has arguably the best set of *ingredients* to launch a dramatically successful heritage strategy. These ingredients include a strong and progressive private sector oriented to 'heritage revival', a thriving market and strong consumer demand for restored homes, and the prospect of major infusions of offshore capital. The heritage industry is - and will continue to be- a critical factor in the future Downtown revitalization and re-development initiative.

3.3.1 Industry Preparedness

The City's private sector entrepreneurs who compose the local heritage revival industry, are

Heritage revival work is adding significantly to the City's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), local employment and to assessed property value, as well as to the City's ability to attract even more offshore investment. However, despite its successes, the local heritage revival industry needs to be better organized to realize its full potential. Some of the factors to be considered include the following:

- Though it makes a significant contribution to the City's GDP and tax base, the local heritage revival industry is not perceived as an industry by the City, or its practitioners.
- Despite efforts by groups such as the Newfoundland & Labrador Home Builders' Association, this industry has not adopted a 'systematic' approach for its own development and promotion.

- Though the leadership role of St. John's entrepreneurs in the Canadian renovation industry is widely acknowledged across Canada, the local heritage revival industry has no system of training or access to expertise: thus there is no assurance that costs are the lowest they can be. This can have a dampening effect on the marketplace.
- The gap in industry information and training feeds the misconception that heritage rehabilitation is expensive, uneconomical and inefficient.
- The City's heritage revival sector has no way of stimulating either the residential or the ICI (Institutional/Commercial/Industrial) market: it has no formal organization, and no short or long-term marketing plan.

Private sector organizations, such as the local Real Estate Board, the Downtown Development Commission, and the Newfoundland & Labrador Home Builders' Association, are ready to endorse, support and participate in any significant upsurge in heritage revival activity.

3.3.2 Market Readiness

The *local market* for heritage revival is extremely strong on the residential side; but, on the ICI side, it is disorganized. Study research has shown:

- With over twenty years of experience with heritage housing and rehabilitation, the real estate market in St. John's has matured to the point that demand for older properties is strong - and relatively knowledgeable - thanks to the sophistication of the local real estate industry;
- The demand for heritage revival projects is strongest in the residential sector: in fact it has been a mainstay of construction activity and jobs. Statistically, it is strongest among properties with a view of the Harbour, and the real estate industry perceives a direct cause-and-effect relationship between *view*, and the market *demand* for upgraded or restored properties;
- Blocking the view of the Harbour would jeopardize the existing pattern of renovation investment on other streets which rely on a "Harbour view" to satisfy the strong consumer demand for Downtown properties and to fuel rehabilitation investment, and which ultimately translates into increased tax revenues for the City of St. John's;
- Offshore investment (primarily oil-related) has begun. This has had a high-profile impact on heritage housing; but its likely impact on the ICI sector is *not yet known*;
- An upsurge in demand for office space next to the Harbour is expected. This will represent a major investment, and a gross increase in jobs and assessment;

- The ICI sector is witnessing a reasonable demand from the private sector, e.g. by communications firms locating on the upper floors of Water Street buildings;
- The public sector exhibits almost no interest in using the City's older buildings, whether these are the public sector's own buildings, or private buildings which are available for lease; and
- The City of St. John's does not have any systematic way to educate the prospective ICI market – particularly in, and for, the public sector – because there is no venue to communicate the relevant skills (pertaining to older buildings) to facilities managers.

3.4 Public Consultation

As part of the process of preparing this report, the Study Team and the Steering Committee held a one-day Downtown Forum to discuss Downtown development and heritage issues, and conducted a number of meetings and interviews with groups and individual stakeholders with interests in the Downtown. The results of the consultations are presented in Background Report No. 4.

The Downtown community of today is radically different than it was 20 years ago. These stakeholders - individuals, investors, lobby groups and neighbourhood organizations,

- Are diverse, articulate and well-informed;
- Have a multi-million dollar 'stake' invested in the Downtown;
- Want to see that their investment is protected ; and
- Have a growing expectation that they will have a more formal role in planning for the Downtown.

Public input received during the consultations also shows that people

- Who live and work Downtown have a great interest in maintaining and preserving the area's heritage fabric and quality of life.
- Are not opposed to new development, but are concerned that it be compatible with the scale, amenity and heritage character of the Downtown.
- Support a mix of residential neighbourhoods, open space and commercial development in the Downtown, for convenience, services, and for the enjoyment of visitors; and
- Want to be included, in a meaningful way, in the planning and decision-making process affecting the Downtown.

3.5 Planning Process

The City's planning process is another "key ingredient" for a successful strategy for Downtown development. During preparatory consultations for this report (including interviews, written submissions and the public Downtown Forum), certain common themes reappeared consistently; and these were borne out by comparative study of planning systems in other jurisdictions. In particular, there were various proposals to make the entire system both "more responsive" and "more proactive" at the same time. The Study Team's response to these ideas is outlined in Section 6.11 of this report, Building Stakeholder Cooperation."

Experience from other jurisdictions demonstrates that there are many positive benefits from a planning system in which there is a genuine commitment to stakeholder consultation which provides a means by which citizens can make an informed,

4.0 Built Heritage - Threats and Opportunities

Streetscape views are a valuable commodity to this City. Residential and commercial properties in the urban core of St. John's are more highly valued when they offer a view of the Harbour and/or the Narrows. The strong demand for properties with a view is reflected in the selling prices of Downtown houses along several key streets which afford a view of the Harbour, and in the increased number of roof top and third floor decks constructed in recent years. During the Downtown Forum in March 2000, many participants stated emphatically that they would oppose any new construction that would impede their existing view.

Many streets leading to the Downtown, such as Pleasant Street, Long's Hill, Cochrane Street, Harvey Road, and others, have splendid vistas of the Harbour and Signal Hill. These visual perspectives accentuate the overall character, ambience and aesthetic value of the Downtown, and are considered by many residents to be an essential ingredient in the community's quality of life. Study research has also shown that these visual attributes and resources also make a significant contribution to the City's economic base and its future potential for growth.

4.1 View Line Considerations

An assessment of several prominent Downtown view lines was undertaken to demonstrate the potential impacts future development could have on Harbour views, and also to illustrate how a viewline analysis might be incorporated into a strategy for Downtown economic development and heritage conservation. The views considered are shown in Figure 4.1 and 4.2. Details of this analysis are presented in Appendix 3.

Current zoning requirements generally limit development in the Downtown to four-storey buildings which has helped maintain the existing scale of St. John's streetscapes. However, there are many areas where five or six storeys could be built

The analysis of various Downtown views illustrates that different approaches to building design and height requirements are possible and feasible, and can be used to preserve existing public and private views of the Harbour. For example:

- The vista along Pleasant Street would be affected by development on the site adjacent to the Delta Hotel south of John Street, where current zoning permits high rise (up to 12 story) development. New development on this site could be achieved with minimum impact if it were designed to be "stepped back" at the corner of New Gower Street/ Springdale Street (see Figure 4.3). By stepping the two buildings in height, one at eight storeys and the other at twelve storeys, Harbour views would be available from office space in both buildings;

Diagram 1
Figure 4.1 Viewline Overview: West and Central Zones

Diagram 2
Figure 4.2 East Zone

Diagram 6
Figure 4.3 Class A Office Space Development Adjacent to Delta Hotel

- Existing buildings, such as the former Post Office Building on Water Street, partially block views of the Harbour. While current zoning restricts office development on Water and Duckworth Streets in this area to a maximum of four storeys, the analysis shows that future development in the shadow of the Post Office Building could be built to five storeys without affecting views in this area. A comprehensive analysis of Downtown view lines would likely demonstrate that the density of office development in this area could be increased with very little impact on the existing views from residential properties above this commercial district.

- The placement of the view line is a major factor when considering the impact of future development on existing views, and for developing building height regulations to preserve public and private views. Figure 4.4 illustrates how the placement of the viewline could affect the height of buildings in several Downtown locations.

- Design solutions to develop sites such as the Standard Manufacturing building on Water Street east and the Irving property at the east end of Duckworth Street could be prepared relatively easily. These sites could be developed in a manner which would respect the views of surrounding property owners and ensure that these valuable views are maintained, or at least not seriously diminished. In the case of the Irving site, this could be accomplished by minimizing the floor plate above grade without any substantial effect on the development capacity of the site. (See Figure 4.5) this would allow the construction of two buildings with plaza space between each structure. Views framed by the two buildings would be maintained for property owners on the north side of Duckworth Street. The breaks between these buildings could be designed and developed to function as public promenade space, taking advantage of the spectacular view of the Harbour and the Narrows and, at the same time, would allow access to ground floor retail areas. Areas below grade could be used for parking;

- The second area where new development higher than four storeys may be suitable is the Harbour Drive block between Baird's Cove and the intersection of Harbour Drive and Water Street (i.e. between the Atlantic Place parking garage and the Fortis Trust building). Any building higher than four storeys would have to be set back from Water Street, oriented toward Harbour Drive, and with parking and vehicular access off Harbour Drive only. Higher development in this block would have minimal impact on the heritage character of Water Street. If development higher than four storeys is considered in this block, then it is recommended that the building facades and retail space on Water Street be retained and public views preserved. The view lines should be examined in detail to determine and assess any potential effect on the significant public views in this area.

Figure 4.4
Diagram 10 Viewline Overview: East Zone Cross Sections

Figure 4.5
Diagram 9 Class A Office Space Development, Duckworth/Hill O'Chips

A more comprehensive analysis of Downtown view lines is required to identify ways to identify and protect important public views, and to ensure the protection of views from residential properties so that the future economic potential of these locations is not jeopardized. A review of building height requirements in the current land-use zones, along important public and private viewlines, could be undertaken to ensure that new development does not block the views. Such a review could include important views identified in the Municipal Plan and the St. John's Open Space and Recreation Plan (1992). Recommended changes could be incorporated into the St. John's Municipal Plan and Development Regulations.

4.2 Opportunities for Developing Class A Office Space

There a number of opportunities for the creation of additional office space in the Downtown. These opportunities include:

- Development of vacant lots
- Renovation of existing buildings
- Additions to existing buildings

An analysis of vacant sites and existing building stock was undertaken to identify opportunities for increasing the stock of Downtown office space. (The results of this analysis are presented in Appendix 3.) The analysis shows:

- The Downtown core has numerous vacant lots with sufficient street frontages for the development of new Class A office space (See Figure 4.6).

- Much of the present building stock on Duckworth Street and Water Street, consisting of numerous "character" buildings - identified in a 1976 Heritage Conservation Area Study - also have large frontages and provide additional opportunities for the development of Class A office space through appropriately designed renovations and additions.

- Renovation of existing structures can provide more interesting and dynamic space than new construction. The core of such structures can be planned with an elevator and scissor stair arrangement - in order to maximize the net rentable area, while properties with frontages of less than 30 feet could be combined to form larger developments of Class A office space.

Figure 4.6
Diagram 5 Downtown Vacant Lots

Building owners and/or property developers often argue that it is uneconomical for them to improve their property to National Building Code standards. In some cases, properties are held until they can be sold for inclusion in some new development, or until the existing building on the property deteriorates and a demolition permit can be obtained. More proactive property owners and innovative developers, recognize the inherent value of their property and generally find appropriate ways and means to meet code requirements and consequently create a revenue generating asset.

4.3 Utilizing Upper Storeys - Duckworth and Water Streets

The upper stories of many currently vacant Downtown properties offer potential for a variety of uses and, as such, represent future economic development opportunities. Their use as Class A or B office space, artist studios or residential accommodation are all possible, and many of these spaces would offer excellent views of the Harbour, the Narrows or Signal Hill. The Delgado Building on Water Street (shown below) is a good example. Current code requirements could easily be met in the renovation process. Opportunities exist for adjoining building owners to act together to upgrade their properties to meet code standards. Examples of the services and facilities which could be cost-shared by two adjoining owners could include exit stairwells, elevators, washrooms or viewing decks.

Developing the St. John's Back Alley Network would promote access and use of basements and upper stories of buildings along Duckworth Street and Water Street. These alleys could become vibrant pedestrian corridors to allow access to new retail outlets, artist studios, office space, coffee shops, etc. This concept was proposed in the 1992 Duckworth West Cathedral Market Square Design Study prepared for the City. Similar approaches have been discussed in the St. John's Arts Strategy, 1999, and the City's own 'The City and the Arts' process, 2000.

Delagdo Building, Water Street

4.4 Utilizing the Waterfront

The City's waterfront area, and the panoramic views it affords, represent an economic opportunity, one which has remained underutilized for many years. Considering what has been accomplished in other cities, a well-planned development of the Harbourfront represents a spectacular and significant economic opportunity for the City of St. John's.

Developers gravitate toward "good locations". In a community where good location has always been and continues to be equated with a view of the Narrows, the obvious choice is the Harbourfront itself.

Many cities have successfully redeveloped their harbourfront areas as major public gathering spaces, and many of these have subsequently evolved into major tourist attractions. Boston, Baltimore, Halifax, Toronto and other cities have developed their waterfronts with highly successful results. These areas have a rich mix of open space, retail establishments, restaurants and bars, offices and hotel accommodation. Appendix 4 contains a case study of Montreal's experience with heritage buildings and infill in waterfront districts to illustrate how other communities have made effective economic use of these sites.

The waterfront area of the Downtown could be developed as an exciting, innovative and highly attractive 'people place', for City residents and visitors alike. The essential elements of this redevelopment initiative could involve the following uses and activities:

- Restaurants and bars with outdoor seating and awnings;
- Retail shops with window display and landscaped entries;
- Office space with views overlooking the Harbour;
- Landscaped walkways with planting, benches, signage, light standards;
- Open squares with seating areas; and
- Parking areas upgraded with landscaping, lighting and brick paving borders.

Figure 4.7 illustrates some of the ways such a concept could be developed and planned. Areas at the rear of properties on Water Street, currently being used for parking, could be improved to support increased commercial activity in the Downtown. Such development should not have a significant impact on parking as there are currently 3,166 downtown parking spaces and the area is well served by public transit.

These improvements would stimulate additional retail space and provide spin-off economic benefits in the form of new commercial spaces for Downtown property owners and retailers.

- Developing the waterfront corridor as an active and vibrant space would connect the west and east ends of the Downtown from the new Convention Centre to the War Memorial - the centrepiece of the City's Downtown area;

- Waterfront redevelopment would provide a significant opportunity for development at the rear of properties on Water Street and create excellent opportunities for integrating those projects with revitalization projects within the existing buildings - accommodating a significant part of the expected demand for prestige commercial/ office space.

- The pedestrian corridor could be used for walking and jogging, further stimulating interest in and demand for a 'Downtown residential lifestyle'.

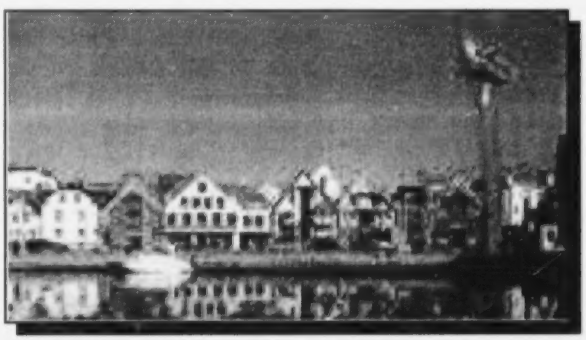
- Currently, the Downtown core does not have a significant, purpose-designed civic open space. A major Civic Square open space could be included in an overall waterfront redevelopment plan. Figure 4.8 shows one possible scenario for development of such a space. Civic amenity space could connect to Harbourside Park and the War Memorial, creating a continuous landscaped urban park area.

- The concept should also address the increase in cruise ship visits to the City. Redevelopment of the St. John's Harbourfront would improve the visual appeal of the City to cruise ship visitors. A purpose-built docking and disembarkment facility could be planned along the waterfront. If the City is to become a serious contender for cruise ship activity, improvements to the waterfront area are recommended.

- Harbourside Park also has potential for becoming a popular public urban space. Its critical location, including access to the waterfront area, has possibilities that are now being explored by the Johnson Family Foundation, for possible future improvements.

Various public authorities and other organizations, such as the City of St. John's, the St. John's Port Authority, the Grand Concourse Authority and the Downtown Development Commission have already been giving attention to some of these options. This is important work, and the public authorities are to be commended for embarking upon it.

The concepts presented in Figures 4.7 and 4.8 are simply ideas and conceptual 'possibilities': they are not meant to replace other initiatives of the City, the Port Authority, and others, to develop strategies for the future of the harbourfront. It is well beyond the mandate of this report to define exactly how a "people place" would eventually look (e.g. whether Harbour Drive would be "pedestrianized" or turned into a "prestige boulevard").



The people-friendly harbourfront of Stavanger, Norway's offshore oil capital.

Figure 4.7
Diagram 11 The Waterfront: Developing Civic Amenity Space

Figure 4.8 Waterfront Improvements: Civic Amenity Space
Diagram 12

Harbourfront redevelopment initiatives imply choices - some of which are complicated, and all involving a difficult balancing of three factors: traffic, "livability" and cost. Harbour Drive is a major arterial which funnels traffic through the Downtown, away from Water and Duckworth Streets. It is not the mandate of this report to comment on whether Harbour Drive actually fulfills that function efficiently. However, it is fair to say that an unintentional side-effect has been the creation of an "pedestrian-unfriendly" space. In this respect, the City is hardly unique: the waterfront area of many cities share a similar fate, and have presented planning problems in various forms. The solutions which cities have devised are radically different from one another:

- Some cities have written off access to their waterfront, by converting their harbourfront area to arterial or freeway traffic. This was implemented in countless North American cities, but then fell out of favour. Vancouver canceled its waterfront arterial in 1973; Halifax and Montreal started waterfront arterials, expropriated land, then reconsidered and arrested their respective projects halfway through the development process.

- Other cities tried to reconcile vehicular traffic with pedestrian use. France, favored "prestige boulevards" which were designed to be fashionable "people places" while still accommodating a fair amount of traffic. The most famous – a kind of Champs Élysées facing the waterfront – is the Promenade des Anglais in Nice; its closest counterpart in the Americas is probably the Avenida Atlantica in Rio de Janeiro. London's Victoria Embankment follows a similar principle. The largest example in Canada is the recent development of Rue des Commissaires facing the Port of Montreal.

- Still other cities have transformed their waterfront areas into well-designed, landscaped open plazas from which automobiles were excluded. Various Olympic ceremonies occurred in such a plaza on the Sydney waterfront.

- Finally, some cities installed major arterials a generation ago (much larger than Harbour Drive), then embarked upon the process of concealing them. In Boston a major arterial running through the city, which limited access to the water, was buried in tunnels. In Toronto there is currently debate on demolition of the Gardiner Expressway, which divides the main city core from the waterfront. In Oslo the former waterfront arterial is now a pedestrian concourse and the traffic has been diverted underground.

As the above points illustrate, there are a variety of possible options for dealing with these 'harbourfront' issues as they pertain to the particular circumstances facing the City of St. John's. These suggestions are offered to illustrate an important point: that creating the City's waterfront area as an attractive destination area is a key ingredient within an overall strategy for Downtown development, and one which the consultants fully recognize will have a direct bearing on relations between the City, other key stakeholders and the corporate community. While it is beyond the mandate of this study to recommend concrete solutions and proposals, it is appropriate to suggest that a more detailed analysis and assessment of the future of the harbourfront and of Harbour Drive be an integral component of any comprehensive planning strategy for the City's Downtown area.

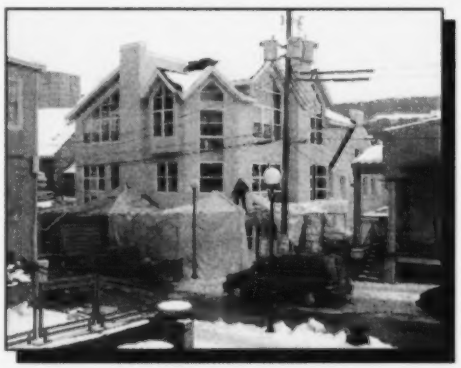
4.5 George Street Streetscape - Entertainment Centre

George Street has become a major entertainment district in Downtown St. John's with a national reputation as a key place to visit in the City. Located within the Heritage District, the success of this area has also prompted an increase in new development and renovation, and the new Civic Centre nearby is likely to solidify its client base even further.

Buildings facing onto George Street are actually the backs of buildings which front on Water Street or Duckworth Street. As a result, the existing building form of the street does not blend well with the heritage character of other areas in the Downtown. Throughout George Street, business operators have attempted to create eye-catching forms, curved surfaces, shed roofs and chalet-like structures in order to attract clientele, or to make their own 'statement'. Buildings such as Christian's Bar, Kelly's Bar and the Silvers Building do attempt to relate to St. John's architecture and are buildings of strong character which have been left visually unaltered. However, these buildings have very little influence on the present character of the street.

The challenge of George Street is that it may not be sustainable. Over time, new entertainment areas may develop - along the harbourfront for example. Entrepreneurs seeking their respective "niche" markets; will stake out visibly upscale or downscale positions in the market. This process has been underway in other North American cities: in such areas, the upscale market has (sooner or later) gravitated to buildings with more architectural prestige, and the downscale market has failed to keep up with these market changes.

It is in the City's interest to assure a minimum public image - a kind of safety net - for the ambience of George Street, in order to keep buildings from going too downscale. Should this process be stemmed, in light of potential changes in consumer market preferences?



(This is a question which has been raised by at least one key George Street property developer who noted that, in time, the development of the new Convention Centre will bring consumers seeking a more 'upscale' and 'traditional' experience within the George Street district.)

Whatever the future holds for George Street, design guidelines can play a highly useful role in maintaining that minimum public image. They signal the City's resolve to maintain a minimum profile to the area. This also reassures the committed entrepreneurs that the City takes the image of the area seriously, and is committed to its longevity.

The St. John's Retail Core Area Design Study was prepared for the City in 1985 and recommended the following detailed design guidelines for new development in the George Street area, and elsewhere in the heritage core of St. John's.

- *Building Materials/ Openings*: Should be similar to cladding used in existing buildings such as brick, stucco and wood clapboard. Window openings should be similar in proportion as existing openings.
- *Details*: Exterior cladding and window openings should be richly textured with trim, pilasters, cornices and other architectural features similar to existing heritage buildings.
- *Exterior Landscaping*: Richly textured paving surfaces should be incorporated. Deck rails should be designed with a level of ornamental detail to match existing heritage buildings. Lighting standards and benches should be of a style complimentary to the existing heritage infrastructure.

- *Signage and Awnings*: Should be complimentary to heritage buildings in size, colour, and type of illumination.

For several reasons, the City has found it difficult to enforce these heritage design guidelines. As a result, most new development relates more to the entertainment uses of the buildings than any serious attempt, or desire, to maintain a heritage image for the area.

The study team has reviewed the design guidelines, and cannot find fault with either the City's original intention, nor with the wording of the guidelines. The problem is that they were implemented with limited success.

It is recommended that the City

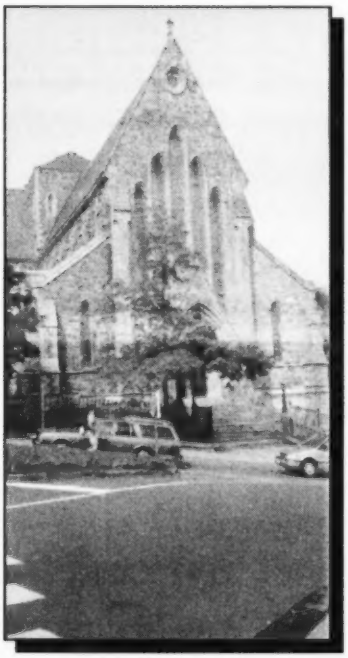
- ❑ Review the existing design guidelines set out in the 1985 St. John's Retail Core Area Design Study; and
- ❑ Work with George Street business owners and the Downtown Development Commission to promote high-quality development, and an attractive streetscape.

It is also recommended that because good design is an essential component of urban planning and Downtown economic development - on George Street and elsewhere in the Downtown - the City should consider the merits of creating an Urban Design Panel, along the lines of the Design Centre recently established by the City of Charleston in the United States. Such a Panel would:

- ❑ Work with and provide advice to developers and local groups at the design stage of a development project;
- ❑ Engage the public in discussions about good urban design;
- ❑ Work with City staff to ensure that good design is encouraged and promoted in all City initiatives and policy.

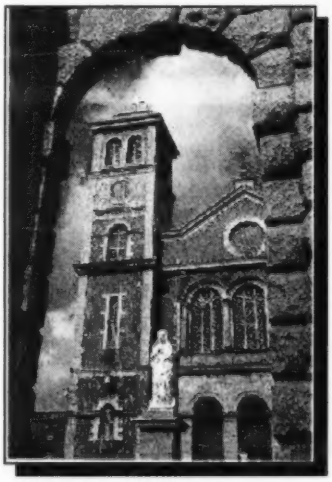
4.6 Heritage Church Structures Downtown

The Downtown heritage area contains a number of churches, including the Basilica, Anglican Cathedral, Gower and Cochrane Street United Churches, and the Kirk. These significant heritage structures are in various states of repair and require major capital costs to be refurbished and maintained. However the future maintenance of these prominent and historic structures presents an increasing economic burden on diminishing church congregations.



These important heritage structures should be considered as an integral component of the heritage image in Downtown, and the City should work with church organizations to explore opportunities which will lead to the preservation and restoration of these important buildings.

Downtown St. John's should become a place where the designation, conservation, and commemoration of church precincts is encouraged.



5.0 Vision

5.1 Acknowledging and Building on Assets

Acknowledging and building on the City's key assets are the basis for a new vision for Downtown St. John's. As outlined in previous chapters, these **principal capital assets include:**

- The City's role as Provincial Capital.
- Offshore petroleum, i.e. primary industry resources;
- History, i.e. historic resources;
- Cultural and community, i.e. people resources;
- Visual setting and character, i.e. visual resources, including the Harbour

The challenge is to mobilize these resources and move the City towards its long-term objectives **to establish and market St. John's as:**

- **The cultural and visitor capital of Eastern Canada;**
- **A unique, attractive and friendly oil capital;**
- **A Capital City that all of the Province's citizens are proud of**

and one in which

- the enhancement, revitalization and appropriate re-use of built heritage resources,
- the socio-cultural resources; and
- community fabric" and "quality of life

are recognized and accepted as valuable assets and the **building blocks of an economic growth strategy for the Downtown**.

5.2 Building on Investor Confidence

Development takes money - which means that it is crucial to nurture investor confidence in the development vision that the City is pursuing. This will require

- Appropriate growth management policy,
- Comprehensive urban planning,
- Development guidelines and attention to good design,

so that property owners, retailers and developers enjoy a **high level of investor confidence** - a situation in which they are not

St. John's is now on the map. Its uniqueness and quality of life ensure that it will continue to be in demand as a place to live, work and visit. Pressures for growth will continue. The key issue becomes one of managing change and directing growth. The premise underpinning the Downtown Strategy is that appropriately directed, new growth can enhance the social,

afraid to make financial decision because they have

- ❑ The assurance that their investment is appreciated and will be protected; and
- ❑ A clear idea how the surrounding area is likely to improve over time.

5.3 Building Public Confidence

To be successful, the Downtown Strategy requires the support of stakeholders and the general public. This requires a **collaborative, consensus-based and future-oriented planning process** - a process in which

- ❑ The City takes the lead role;
- ❑ Where participants and interest groups are welcomed and encouraged to play a positive role in building the Downtown vision.

With the appropriate consultation with all relevant stakeholders, it is possible to pursue

- ❑ The protection and enhancement of neighbourhood structure and character;
- ❑ Demographic diversity and balance;
- ❑ Appropriate mixed-use activities;
- ❑ New opportunities for a diverse range of affordable housing, commercial services and community amenities; and
- ❑ An ever-improving quality of life in the Downtown community.

5.4 Commitment to Best Practices

Throughout the world, local governments have developed planning procedures which encourage the input of an informed citizenry in decision-making. In the context of St. John's and its Downtown, an improved planning process should adhere to the following best practices if social and economic benefits are to be maximized:

- ❑ Taking a holistic view in proposing actions to effect benefits, remembering the axiom of **sustainable development** that everything connects to everything else.
- ❑ Minimizing any adverse effects on the disadvantaged segments of the community and **maximizing the equitable distribution** of benefits throughout St. John's society.
- ❑ Pursuing the City's policy objectives with respect to **legally designated heritage areas.**

Sustainable development means extending the economic life of the existing building stock and established districts while capitalizing on their heritage character, and encouraging the wide distribution of the benefits

- ❑ **Integrating** built heritage revival policies with all other City of St. John's policies for economic development in the Downtown, and in the overall municipal economy.
- ❑ Collecting the necessary **data** to **monitor and evaluate** the performance of built heritage revival on a regular basis.

5.5 Application to Strategic Objectives

Based on the above discussion, a realistic, appropriate and achievable Strategy must:

1. Encourage **continued investment trends** in the Downtown;

2. Stimulate further **investor confidence**;

3. **Protect the investment** which has already been made;

4. Continue to build upon and **expand the City's growing visitor industry** to maximize economic spin-off benefits;

5. Create a climate which can **capture the maximum benefits from future business investment**, particularly with respect to offshore petroleum resources, and related economic activities;

6. Include measures to conserve and enhance the City's heritage resources,
   - ❑ for their **inherent cultural value;** and
   - ❑ for the **economic spin-off benefits** derived from appropriate restoration and rehabilitation (i.e. employment benefits and new business investment opportunities); and

7. Maintain and **enhance the community as an attractive, pleasant and safe environment** in which people can live, work and visit. In other words, pay very close attention **quality of life issues.**

These seven strategic objectives are the key parameters which inform the discussion and design of a Downtown strategy.

5.6 The Vision

If it were possible to forecast a Downtown which corresponded to the above criteria, what would it look like? Is it possible to envision such a Downtown within a ten-year time horizon? The answer is yes.

The Vision of Downtown St. John's is:

1. **An internationally recognized, historical, old port city in which residents, businesses and visitors are welcome;**

2. **Desirable residential neighbourhoods, with fully rehabilitated housing stock, looking as attractive as its original builders intended;**

3. **An unforgettable commercial core featuring authentic traditional buildings, well conserved and rehabilitated, which create a highly competitive retail sector along Water and Duckworth Streets;**

4. **A desirable office/commercial location, with a solid supply of Class A and Class B office space to meet the needs and expectations of the corporate community;**

5. **Low-rise buildings which do not obstruct the irreplaceable views of the Harbour;**

6. **A vibrant entertainment area centered on George Street;**

7. **A revitalized, pedestrian-friendly harbourfront;**

8. **A "people place" which forms the soul of the city – *where it all began and continues.***

To create such a physical context, it will be necessary to

- ❑ rehabilitate existing buildings,
- ❑ convert some buildings (which may have outlived their existing use) to new uses,
- ❑ create new complementary buildings through appropriate and well-designed infill; and
- ❑ re-invent the Harbourfront.

Over the last twenty years, Downtown St. John's has enjoyed a major resurgence in heritage revival activity. This wave of investment can be significantly increased. Chapter 4 has suggested some approaches for achieving the physical elements of the vision.

The Study Team has concluded that the **four key components of this vision** are indeed feasible, and achievable:

- ❑ **It is possible to envision a totally improved/rehabilitated Downtown, where (for a relatively manageable total investment) virtually every older building has been upgraded, making St. John's one of the most attractive, congenial-looking, and economically vibrant cities in North America.**

- ❑ **It is possible to convert various buildings which have outlived their existing use to new uses. (For example, since the study was launched, the King George V Building – which many observers believed to be the consummate example of dereliction beyond hope – has been slated for adaptive, and highly innovative, re-use).**

- ❑ **It is equally possible to create new complementary buildings in "infill" locations; in fact, it is possible to convert the lowrise scenario into something which is not only the right thing to do in St. John's, but one of the most enticing prospects to be found anywhere along the Atlantic coast today.**

- ❑ **It is possible to re-invent the Harbourfront, as a public gathering place, a working Harbour, and an area equipped with office and retail space offering some of the most sought after views in the country - an attractive sight - from both land and sea.**

5.6.1 Rehabilitation and Conversions

The existing building stock offers a variety of exciting opportunities and options for developing Class A office space through renovations and additions. Downtown St. John's has numerous character buildings which

- Are primarily located on Duckworth and Water Streets;
- Have large street frontages which are well suited for Class A office space buildings;
- Would provide more interesting and dynamic space than new buildings; and
- Would have views of the Harbour and Signal Hill from the top floor penthouse suites.

Renovations on larger buildings already undertaken Downtown, such as the Delgado building, have provided distinctive office space. There is no reason why this form of development should not be continued and expanded.

5.6.2 New Development Through Infill

The infill potential of the Downtown is considerable, and falls into two main categories:

- Sites with development potential within the existing urban fabric; and
- Sites on the periphery of the existing urban fabric.

In the first category, the Study Team has concluded that the space needed to accommodate new construction is already available. It is well-located, and would be entirely appropriate for Class A lowrise development. However, such new development must be consistent with the vision for the Downtown. To accomplish this

- Current height restrictions limiting development to four storeys would be retained in most of the Downtown study area except where a viewline analysis could show higher buildings could be accommodated without blocking views;
- Breaks between building masses would be required in order to expand view lines from the streets and maintain views from other buildings. Such breaks could be designed and developed as public promenade space so as to provide access to ground floor retail areas as well as take advantage of harbour views; and
- In some areas parking could be accommodated below grade.

5.6.3 Re-inventing the Harbourfront

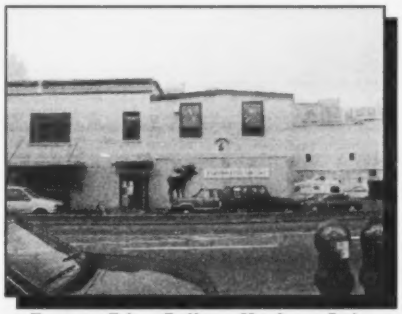
As discussed in Section 4.4 of this report, the greatest potential for a unique mix of new development, rehabilitation, infill and the development of civic amenity space is the waterfront area. The Harbourfront is perhaps the City's largest "diamond in the rough."

Paradoxically, the most important collection of sites where infill development is possible, is in the most central location of the City - yet it is one on which the City has turned its back for decades: It is the Harbourfront itself. The area with some of the most sought-after views in the country, is, perhaps, the City's most

The Study Team recommends that Harbour Drive become *the* prestige boulevard of the City – the recommended location for Class A space with the perfect view of The Narrows with a people-oriented promenade along the Harbour.

In order for Harbour Drive to become a prestige boulevard, it would need to become:

- More pedestrian-friendly;
- The kind of fashionable street where owners/developers would want to put their facades instead of their back doors;
- Carefully integrated with the existing buildings on Water Street, to ensure that they were complementary, and that construction along Harbour Drive did not become an impetus to turn Water Street buildings into parking lots.



Eastern Edge Gallery, Harbour Drive

In order to dispel the notion that the Harbourfront is too "grubby" for Class A space, the success of this scenario is obviously closely linked to the Harbour cleanup. Above all, owners would need to be persuaded to take advantage of acting cooperatively: if such a scenario is to engender the required level of investor confidence, it must be preceded by a *firm* City commitment to make it happen.

Re-inventing the Harbourfront as the City's 'Jewel in the Crown' can be achieved with the co-operation, collaboration and collective investment of several key stakeholders and interest groups: the St. John's Port Authority, major property owners (e.g. Fortis Corporation, Harvey and Company Limited), Downtown retailers, the Johnson Family Foundation, the Cruise Ship Authority, the development community, the Provincial Government and, of course, the City of St. John's.

Without the appropriate stakeholder collaboration and investment, this initiative will not happen, and a major economic development opportunity will be foregone. In this respect, the proposed waterfront redevelopment concept illustrates the critical requirement and economic necessity for a new ***Downtown Partnership*** including all stakeholders in the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors and in the community at large.

The Study Team believes that this is a worthy and economically sound vision for the City. Together, these measures are intended to produce one of the finest urban centres anywhere – and one which resonates to the pride and identity of the people of St. John's, and of the Province as a whole.

6.0 Achieving the Vision

Achieving the vision for the future of Downtown St. John's need not involve massive amounts of public funds. Creating a climate for change and an environment in which change can be encouraged and directed will require political leadership and improvements in development policy, programming and process. This Chapter presents some of the measures needed to mobilize public and private resources to take advantage of the exciting opportunities for development in the Downtown.

6.1 Adopting the Vision

An official municipal **strategy** for the revival of older buildings and renewed harbourfront development is more than the sum of its parts not only because of its intrinsic tactical features, but also because the ***publicity*** **associated with it should convey the municipality's confidence in, and commitment to, this vision** to all stakeholders and potential investors.

A unifying focus - a "vision" is the one missing element that the City could introduce, and which could set off a domino effect in development of the downtown.

That means that there is a substantial challenge in terms of communications. It is important that the City

- ❑ H*ave* a proper strategy for inducing investment; and
- ❑ **Be *perceived* as having that strategy**.

In order to meet this challenge, the City's strategy must be

- ❑ Issued from the highest level of political authority (Mayor and Council);
- ❑ Packaged for delivery to the private sector, with an appropriate communications plan; and
- ❑ Repeated regularly.

Once the vision has been articulated, it is essential to galvanize action around it. This is the consummate test of leadership: it is to attract the stakeholders to buy into the vision and make it a reality.

That is *not* a test of regulatory control or spending-power. While these are important, the **key element is in the field of communications** - with a variety of stakeholders including property-owners, developers, facilities managers, merchants, institutions, renovators, realtors, media and others. In each case, the first step may be no more nor less than the City hosting a meeting "at the highest level" and to present its vision as professionally as possible followed up by co-ordinating efforts at the working level.

6.2 Bringing Supply and Demand Together

Since there are several different kinds of buildings in the Downtown, with many different uses, it follows that there are **several different markets**, notably

- The corporate office market;
- The consumer housing market;
- The retail market; and
- The governmental and institutional markets.

A marketing strategy to effect the desired changes in the Downtown would need to be tailored to each of these components specifically.

In many cities, part of the economic obstacle to the revival of many heritage buildings is weakness in the market. In St. John's, the market is stronger in some sectors, than in others. A building owner may feel that the market demand for an *existing* building may not be sufficient to warrant its retention or rehabilitation and thus make no effort to improve it. However, market demand could be substantially different if more people knew about the prospects:

The challenge is to tailor the supply to the demand and bring the two together. That challenge can be met by measures at the provincial or municipal level, or preferably at both together, as outlined on the following pages.

6.2.1 The Presentation

Once a vision has been agreed to and adopted it must be packaged and sold to those markets who will invest in the Downtown. There is an old saying in marketing circles, to the effect that when one is selling a product, one must profile "not just the steak, but the sizzle."

Competent heritage developers and marketers know that the key is to **present a heritage property, or an area**

- **not as it *is*,**
- **but rather as it *would be -- if* it were treated properly.**

In the private sector generally, advertisers do not take the risk of assuming that their audience will be able to put the correct mental picture together - they actually **draw a picture.**

The same applies to developers. No builder of tract housing would ever say to a consumer "behold this expanse of mud, and *imagine* what it will look like with your new home on it." Instead, attractive illustrations are produced of what will *eventually* be created.

The same must be done with the marketing of the Downtown: in a competent marketing strategy, it is the *eventual* product that must be promoted the most vigorously, not "the intervening stages" (including how it appears "temporarily").

This is arguably the **most crucial – and exciting – prospect for the City**. On this one factor rides the question of whether the Downtown is developed with lowrises or highrises, and hence the **future face of the City.**

6.2.2 The Delivery

The delivery of such a message to prospective investors could be entrusted to:

- The **City's economic development division** (which has an existing mandate to attract investment from out-of-province); as a model, Montreal's economic development agency has had considerable success in its assigned task of attracting investment to Old Montreal from out-of-town (See Appendix 4 for examples);
- Various **business organizations** that have a similar function;
- On-location professional marketers in cities like Calgary;
- **All of the above**.

An effective sales pitch must be brought to the consumer on the consumer's own turf. Thus City's economic development division should consider a sales campaign delivered **directly into the offices of the prospective anchor tenants for Class A space.**

When Andrex Developments of Ottawa undertook to convert a heritage building (a century-old military hospital/armoury) into condos, it sought a marketing firm which had experience in both heritage properties and exciting salesmanship. The conversion made real estate history in Canada, as Phase 1 sold out in

6.3 Improving Demand

6.3.1 The Office Sector

Marketing heritage-type space as corporate offices will be challenging because many of the leasing decisions will not even be made in the City or in the Province, but rather in places like Calgary or Dallas. Corporate executives may therefore be making their decisions with only a limited understanding (or interest) on how these developments affect the rest of the City.

This creates a totally different marketing context from that which prevails in the consumer housing sector. If the message cannot be carried to the decision-makers *locally*, then there is no choice but to carry the message to them *out-of-province*.

In short, the City cannot be passive. It must be fully prepared to **launch an energetic campaign of self-promotion for its Downtown**, putting forward *its own* dramatic and exciting vision of what it wants its Downtown to look like.

6.3.2 The Residential Sector

Improving demand in the residential sector involves increasing the market exposure of

- Heritage properties; and
- Heritage rehabilitation services.

Although there is a fair amount of advertising in St. John's for heritage-type buildings (e.g. ads placed by realtors) and for heritage rehabilitation services (e.g. ads placed by contractors), there is **no evidence of any concerted strategy**. Are any new approaches conceivable, to improve the functioning of the marketplace and (indirectly) improve market values?

Those are questions which face communities all across Canada. The need for concerted strategy at the national level was identified by the Canadian Home Builders' Association in 1984 when it launched the Canadian Renovators Council, and in its call for a national strategy (1987). In 1996, a joint industry-government task force reported on a range of prospective measures to improve the fundamentals of the industry (*The Residential Renovation Industry Framework*, CMHC 1996). The following strategies draw heavily upon the approaches which were developed nationally over the past fifteen years:

- **Distinct marketing:** Involves placing certain properties in a distinct market, for **distinct promotional treatment**. This often means that real estate tabloids and newspapers may segregate heritage-type properties and emphasize their heritage appeal in a special "carriage trade" column. This is the case in most Canadian cities: the most notable example is the daily newspaper in Victoria, the *Times-Colonist*.

- **Promotion in *Homes* articles:** Almost every major city newspaper in Canada carries a weekly *Homes* section; in recent years, these sections have witnessed an upsurge in coverage for "elegant rehab". This has had a positive impact on the heritage industry. Local media should be encouraged to continue their focus on Downtown properties and heritage development.

- **Specific publications:** In the U.S.A. and Britain, the market goes a further step, with tabloid-type publications producing "classified ads" sections specifically for heritage properties. The American *Preservation News* is a good example. In Germany, the process goes further still, with state governments (the equivalent of provinces) producing **catalogues** of the major heritage properties which are in search of new buyers or investors; these catalogues are used in the real estate and development market.

A distinct advertising strategy for heritage is recommended, and **could be developed** in consultation with the St. John's Real Estate Board.

Improving demand for residential rehabilitation could also be accomplished by:

- **Promotion with contractors:** Working with the Newfoundland and Labrador Home Builders Association, the City could promote the expertise of local builders and contractors in heritage rehabilitation. The Canadian Home Builders' Association made major contributions to the promotion of rehabilitation *nationally*, but this has been harder to do *provincially and locally*. This is because of a perceived shortage of "critical mass" to do concerted promotion in St. John's for heritage-type rehabilitation.

- **"How-To" Information:** The publication of "How-To" materials **demystifying** heritage projects, and giving the public a *taste* of what is feasible is a much more straightforward approach. The City of Saint John, for example, has an award-winning series of brochures describing different aspects of the rehabilitation of heritage buildings. The various home builders' associations also produce their own brochures describing the correct way to hire a reputable contractor, etc. The City's Heritage Advisory Committee has already taken the initiative of considering this prospect, and that initiative deserves to be supported and expanded.

6.3.3 The Retail Sector

The marketing of heritage revival to the retail sector combines

- Many of the same features as in the office sector and the housing sector;
- Many of the same approaches used in "**Main Street**" projects, in which St. John's already has experience; and
- Collaboration between the City, the retail sector and other Downtown businesses, institutions and residents.

An active marketing and promotional campaign to promote the new vision of the Downtown - including the development and construction of a revitalized Harbourfront area – would have a dramatic impact upon the entire **Downtown as a commercial "anchor"** and could be expected to improve business prospects and investment generally.

6.3.4 The Governmental and Institutional Sectors

In many cities across Canada, the public sector is the *least* likely to either

- Rehabilitate its own buildings; or
- Lease in rehabilitated buildings.

Facilities managers need to be informed about the potential and correct approach for (re)using older buildings. The City has a role to play in bringing together various parties in the public and private sector to better promote the use and re-use of heritage buildings in the downtown.

Informing government managers about better approaches to the upkeep and/or leasing of heritage buildings can be done through an existing network of on-the-job facilities management training, and could involve the following steps:

- Make **arrangements with training firms to incorporate strategies for older buildings into modules** pertaining to "asset management plans", etc. (some of the firms already have trainers who are experienced in heritage projects);
- Arrange for such modules to be marketed in St. John's; and
- Encourage participation by local facilities managers.

Other possibilities could involve:

- Two-day **management training courses**, offered by a firm of national credibility, to demonstrate to locally-based public sector managers how to deal more effectively with older buildings for public sector use (governmental, medical, educational, etc.); and
- Development of an "**asset management plan**", based upon proper facilities management principles, to address the challenges of the Downtown's collection of older public buildings - in terms that facilities managers understand and consider credible.

"Real Property Asset Management Plans" are used by the public sector, as well as large private sector property-owners. These detailed, site-specific plans have the following components:

- A strategic plan for the entire property portfolio;
- A needs analysis (simultaneous with strategic plan);
- A ten-year management plan which includes provision for
  - cyclic maintenance, and
  - parameters/criteria for acquisition and disposition.

Pubic Works and Government Services Canada has such a Plan for its entire Atlantic Region portfolio which allows the Federal Government to predict how many square feet of space it will need -- now or in the future. The plan includes the timetable for the maintenance or repair of these buildings, along with renovation or remodelling, construction or removal. Facilities managers for the Province, the City, and the School Board may also have such counterparts; and if other major property-owners (e.g. institutions or in the private sector) use professional facilities managers, they presumably use some form of counterpart too, albeit with varying degrees of sophistication (and under various names).

The proposal here is straightforward:

- Major property portfolios should have such a Plan,
- The City, therefore, should use the initiative of this Strategy, to announce that it proposes to bring various parties in the public and private sector together to share property information and better promote the downtown.

This sharing of information and "vision" is indispensable to sound property management by the public authorities involved. In the Canadian experience, it has been possible for federal taxpayers' money (in anchor tenancies) to bankroll projects that flew in the face of municipal aspirations; such disjointed efforts are not an efficient use of public resources. By harmonizing their Real Property Asset Management Plans, the three levels of government are in the best position to get the most bang for their buck.

Once that process has begun, the next step is to draw other property-owners into it. That is in the latter's self-interest, because "information sharing" can be extremely valuable in the real estate business. In the course of that exercise, other stakeholders would be induced to upgrade the sophistication of their own Real Property Asset Management Plans, tailoring them to the new vision.

"Leadership" by the City in this area, as in many other areas proposed in this Report, is not necessarily an expensive or onerous proposition.

- ❑ The first step is to host an initial meeting of public sector facilities management staff, to interest them in a harmonization of effort (possibly under the Municipal Plan review process).
- ❑ It would then involve follow-up meetings to explore the extent to which a joint set of Real Property Asset Management Plans could be developed (including efforts to draw other facilities managers into the process, such as those from the institutional and private sectors).
- ❑ Seminars could be held to upgrade skills on the development of Real Property Asset Management Plans.
- ❑ The major investment is therefore a time investment. Although the City has its own facilities managers (who would want and need to be involved), the extra demand on time (particularly for liaison) may require some outsourcing, preferably to one or more professionals in this field.

It is this joint effort by the public sector, in cooperation with major stakeholders in the institutional and private sectors, which is the keystone to making the city *look* like a capital city.

6.4 Mobilizing the Heritage Industry

Although the heritage revival industry has directed tens of millions of dollars into the City's GDP, in the most high-visibility area of the City, **heritage revival is not yet perceived as an industry.** The local industry's most vigorous participants do not *perceive themselves* as being part of a heritage industry despite the fact that some are among the most respected heritage renovators in Canada. At the present time, the industry has no

- Venue in which the participants can work together to develop a strategy,
- Coherent marketing strategy;
- Product development;
- Concerted business development;
- Concerted advertising;
- Personnel training programs (unlike other provinces);
- Effort to create a distinct profile for itself, or to attract consumers to its distinct services.

A coherent industrial approach presupposes a willingness for cooperation among entrepreneurs; and a proper partnership to assist with industrial development, marketing, training, dissemination of know-how, etc. These goals are all feasible because the embryonic elements are already present. If the City can **galvanize the heritage revival industry** - on a sustained self-supporting basis - then it will launch a chain of events which will assure the progressive improvement of the Downtown over time.

Although the private sector cannot solve all the problems facing heritage or the Downtown, it can become a far more potent ally.

6.5 Developing Superior Know-How

Old buildings are tricky. Aside from the legalities involved in heritage designations, in the business world there is a right way and a wrong way to invest, to manage, to plan, to conduct work, and to lease these buildings.

- Those who know the ropes can be very successful;
- Those who don't can lose their shirts;
- Most people believe that they do not have the necessary information or training at their disposal;
- Not surprisingly, the level of investor confidence is nowhere close to where it could be.

If St. John's has been able to come this far *in the absence* of any systematic approach to informing owners, managers, developers, investors, contractors and institutions about the multi-million dollar heritage industry, *what would the City be capable of*, if there were *more* people who knew the best way to do this?

The renovation industry in North America is now worth over $300 billion annually (and growing at twelve percent annually). This is because of its improving competitiveness and the sheer volume of the industry which has created economies which were absent a decade ago.

Heritage revival involves investment in both materials and labour. Know-how is essential in order to do the job correctly and profitably:

- Consumers (or contractors acting on their behalf) must know the correct materials to use, where they are available at reasonable prices and how to find workers who know what they're doing.
- Contractors must be aware that this is a rapidly evolving sector: new materials (notably replacement parts for heritage-style projects) are coming on to the market everyday; installation and repair techniques are also evolving.

In the case of heritage revival, **this know-how can sometimes have a monetary value far beyond what any subsidy or incentive program could offer.** For example, in the case of one national historic site in Ottawa, the municipality asked one architectural firm for an estimate of a "bare-bones" restoration cost; the firm (reputable, but only modestly familiar with heritage) quoted $11 million. A more expert heritage specialist got the job, and brought it in at $4.6 million. In St. John's, the Newfoundland & Labrador Home Builders' Association has many similar anecdotes which indicate that for individual home renovation projects, the **price discrepancies between well-informed and ill-informed projects** can be proportionately as great.

The problem is no longer the unavailability of replacement materials and technical know-how; it is ***access.*** In a word, many locations and projects *have not caught up* with the new techniques that are available. That problem exists at the level of the individual consumer, the level of the investor/developer, and the level of contractors and tradespersons.

6.5.1 Informing Individual Consumers

The St. John's marketplace offers **almost nothing which can assure consumers that they can get reliable rehabilitation/heritage revival work at a reasonable price.** Today's market offers consumers little security or comfort: they don't know who to call, they don't know what work to expect, at what price, with what quality, or with what guarantee. Contractors who do conduct their businesses with the highest ethical standards must compete with an underground economy which is generally believed to be among the most vigorous in Canada. In short, the marketplace is a mess.

One solution to problems of this nature is that of an "**information clearing-house**"- a service that provides either referrals, or hard information, about the best way to undertake heritage revival projects.

The effect of such a service can be dramatic; and it is not confined to the architectural or structural niceties of the building. The most telling example in Canada is the case of St. John's itself. In the 1970s, when the City first established its historic districts, its architectural committee developed an informal practice whereby

- the committee would *not merely reject* proposals for incongruous renovations,
- but would produce a *counterproposal.*

This informal practice went even further: if the counterproposal was more expensive than the renovator's original idea, the City would make up the difference. The budget allocated for that purpose was only $25,000 - for the entire area. Some observers expected that this budget would be used up in a very short time. This budgetary allocation was discontinued after several years: because it had *never been touched*:

- In *every* instance of a counterproposal, the committee had produced a concept which would cost the same or less than the original proposal.

St. John's experience in this area was precedent-setting, and the City should feel fully entitled to be proud about it – and to explore where this idea can profitably lead to next, like

- A formalized information clearing-house for consumers;
- A *partnership* for that purpose, with organizations such as the Newfoundland & Labrador Home Builders' Association, local community colleges, the Association of Architects and/or other interested parties.

6.5.2 Informing Investors/Developers

There is nothing new about the notion of providing assistance to the private sector in the form of professional information. Today, in many parts of Canada, this kind of assistance is provided either by provinces or by municipalities, and sometimes by both.

Information advisory services, similar to a variety of business management information services, can be considered in the context of heritage buildings, i.e. modules or **seminars aimed at the real estate investment and development community.** These could be offered in partnership with other organizations and institutions that offer business training. As St. John's will have an ongoing need for a **corps of competent "heritage developers"** – they will need all the help that they can get to ensure that they have all of the right information.

6.5.3 Informing Contractors and Trades

The notion of providing assistance to the private sector, in the form of professional information, is not new. It is the kind of assistance which is today provided either by provinces or by municipalities, and sometimes by both. At present, the City's Dept. of Economic Development and Tourism has taken the initiative of offering a seminar program on "Doing Business Downtown", to show what the Downtown has to offer to the retail and office sectors. This is an initiative which deserves support.
Like the entrepreneurs in heritage development, contractors who do projects on heritage

buildings are also in need of information. Despite the presence of heritage contractors from St. John's who have acquired national and even international reputations, Newfoundland and Labrador has no program for the training of renovation contractors, let alone for the training of contractors focussing on heritage properties.

This has been a source of concern at the Newfoundland & Labrador Home Builders' Association. Home builders' associations in several other provinces have introduced training programs for renovators. In some jurisdictions, these programs have been elevated to the status of certification systems (as in the case of British Columbia's Registered Renovation Professionals). Now may be the right time to explore the prospect of a **joint project with the Newfoundland and Labrador Home Builders Association** to fill this training void.

6.6 Reducing Disincentives

6.6.1 Fears of Red Tape

The concern about red tape is one on which some cities have been taking steady action over the last several years. Owners of heritage buildings sometimes fear that rehabilitation/heritage revival projects will involve additional red tape. Even in cities like St. John's, where the additional holding time is usually not significant, there is sometimes a *perception* that it is – and that perception can have a certain deterrent effect.

In response to this situation, some U.S. municipalities have introduced a **'Green Door Policy'**: **an automatic 'urgent' sticker is attached to every application for the rehabilitation of designated heritage properties.** In Canada, Vancouver has adopted the same practice. In Yellowknife, the municipality went further: it committed itself to processing the technical aspects of heritage rehabilitation projects within ten days. The City of Kitchener has further strengthened its green-door policy by assigning a staff person to walk applicants through the maze of the necessary approvals. Its building inspectors also take a proactive role with heritage renovation projects, including advice on cost-effective code compliance and issuance of staged permits to lessen accumulative delays.

In other words, this Green Door policy departs from the first-come, first-served principle which usually applies to the processing of all applications for permits. A preferential system could have important political benefits and financial savings for investors.

6.6.2 Fears of Spiralling Taxes

Property tax has an important impact on decision-making for real estate – not only because of what the tax system *actually* does, but also what the public *thinks* it does.

In actual terms, the current system of municipal taxation provides a disincentive for all rehabilitation (or other development) in the sense that any rehabilitation may trigger an **increase in assessment**, with a resulting increase in municipal taxation. In the case of St. John's, some observers have mentioned instances where property taxes have **multiplied** after the restoration was completed. Other instances indicate work being finished in November, being documented in tax rolls within a few months, and prorated **retroactively**. In St. John's, re-assessment is expected to be retroactive to the date of occupancy of the restored premises.

The most successful technique in North America to combat this situation is the so-called **moratorium technique** which responds to the *perceived* disincentive for rehabilitation. Using their statutory power to give grants to heritage projects, various Canadian municipalities use this approach in the following manner:

- As heritage properties are improved, assessed values rise; the municipality makes a **grant** (as it is empowered to) to the project, and the **amount** of that grant (for an approved improvement) is ***exactly equal* to the increase in taxes** stemming from the rehabilitation project.

- In principle, it is **not necessary for any cash to change hands**: the entire matter is done on paper, via what is called a 'set-off.' This set-off applies for a specified number of years (5 years in Edmonton, Saskatoon and Hamilton; 7 in Yellowknife);

- When the set-off period expires, taxes rise to their normal level. The municipality reaps the benefits of its investment, and the owner has had a breathing space (which, in the case of commercial projects, is particularly important since the years immediately following restoration usually have the tightest cash flow).

Another version of this concept is to provide grants to the permit fees or development charges. The same formula would be at work: the grant is pegged at exactly the same figure as what the applicant would pay, there is a set off of accounts and no money would actually change hands.

The *City of St. John's Act* empowers the City to make grants to heritage projects, at Section 355 (9). It therefore appears that the basic format of a moratorium technique, as described above, **would be feasible in St. John's.** In fact, Council has already given approval in principle for property tax measures (full tax phased in over five years) for commercial and institutional heritage properties. This kind of initiative deserves support.

6.7 Reducing Risk

Many people believe that heritage revival projects are riskier than others. Although the City's experience (and property values) over the last twenty years should have exploded that myth, it is still to be found - notably in certain circles in the financial community.

In classical real estate theory, the three foundations of value are location, location and location. Unfortunately, that led to a paradox, in terms of the application of conventional wisdom to renovation projects. Under conventional wisdom, a location would either be 'good' or 'bad': If it was 'good', then there were strong probabilities that any re-use of an existing building on the site would be deemed an underdevelopment of the property, when compared with the prospect of a higher-intensity use on that site. If the location was 'bad', then the prospective renovation of a building on the site would then be treated as *over*-development of the property. Either way, the prospects for financing would be poor.

That conventional wisdom started to come under immense attack almost thirty years ago, because it failed to anticipate the continent-wide renovation boom, as the North American market went through a major shift in demand. If conventional wisdom had been correct, then renovation would have been appropriate only in that tiny minority of cases where it represented neither a mathematical over-development nor under-development of the property. As the demand for renovations reached in the hundreds of billions of dollars per year, more and more financial institutions concluded that the traditional approach was counterproductive.
There are two main ways to tackle this problem:

- For the City to issue **high-profile declarations** indicating that a location is likely to become good (i.e. bolster confidence); and
- To **encourage developers and investors to move in packs** into a location, so that they have enough critical mass to *make* the location good.

6.7.1 High-Profile City Declarations of Intent

Through Municipal Plan statements - reinforced by ongoing and visible public policy and infrastructure investment - it is possible for any city to indicate that a location is likely to become "good" and thereby bolster investor confidence. However this approach must be pursued vigorously, in close consultation with the business community, if it is to be successful.

6.7.2 Encouraging Developers and Investors to Move in Packs

Another approach is to **encourage group action among developers**: *i.e.*, to encourage *developers to work in groups* to rehabilitate entire areas at the same, if this is possible. This strategy is designed to help overcome locational obstacles and to reduce the risk element for each individual entrepreneur.

There is an important economic corollary:

- Since any person investing in real estate should be aware of the concerns about location;
- An investor will realize that the economic benefits of investment can be seriously compromised (or even reversed) by incompatible development nearby.

For centuries, it has been well recognized that no investor will spend money on a house, if there is a possibility that a neighbour could build a stable upwind; and over time, land-use controls evolved not merely (or even primarily) to improve local amenity, but (more importantly) to provide ***predictability*** **which is the very essence of an investor's sense of security.** For decades, economists have understood that a certain amount of control of investment is essential in order to allow other investors to invest at an optimal level, so that the total aggregate level of investment is optimized.

As applied to heritage properties, the conclusion is straightforward:

- It will be immensely more difficult to persuade owners to make a significant investment in rehabilitation/heritage revival, if there is even a chance that their efforts will be *counteracted* by an incompatible development next door.

In order to provide an adequate comfort level to prospective rehabilitation investors, the fate of a heritage area must be spelled out with as much predictability as possible. It is not in the investors' collective interest to have it

6.8 Demystifying Heritage Protection

Legal mechanisms to protect heritage properties and areas are often seen as obstacles for investment because of controls placed on demolition, alteration and new infill development. Yet, heritage regulations are really no different than other regulatory measures used to protect the public interest in planning and development matters. They are part of the "rules of the game", and their basic objective is to ensure orderly growth and the wise management of change. Nevertheless, the purpose of the regulatory environment for heritage buildings and districts is not well understood by citizens, and its economic benefits are poorly communicated to investors.

The City of St. John's was one of the leaders in Canada in establishing a heritage by-law, in setting up a heritage advisory committee and especially in designating heritage areas. Among its responsibilities under the *City of St. John's Heritage By-law*, the Heritage Advisory Committee is meant to compile and submit to the City "a list of buildings within the City which are of architectural and historic interest" (*Section 9.1*).

The message is simple. Heritage regulations protect investments in conservation and rehabilitation from devaluation by inappropriate future developments to, or in the surroundings of, the heritage

A comprehensive list of such properties - the most basic requirement for producing information with which to encourage conservation - is needed. **This state of affairs not only lessens Council's ability to protect its built heritage but also fails to provide investors with important information which can be assigned a surrogate monetary value.** The economic consequences of the generation and transmission of information about the heritage character of a property include:

- Identification and documentation may trigger eligibility for incentives;
- Promotional information draws audiences, especially from tourism;
- Research publications on building history and preservation technology guides conservation work;
- Feasibility studies determine if a proposed project makes economic good sense;
- Surveys and guides of under-utilized buildings identify reinvestment opportunities;
- Portfolios on investment opportunities in heritage buildings help forge partnerships.

The lack of appropriate information products on heritage buildings may also hinder the Heritage Advisory Committee in its efforts to encourage owners to apply to have their property legally designated as a heritage building. In cases of highly important heritage buildings, insufficient information for owners and investors may decrease the ability of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador to pursue its program for architectural conservation.

The most problematic matter for demystifying the process and effect of legal heritage designation is the heritage areas of Downtown (Historic Precinct and Heritage Conservation, as per St. John's Municipal Plan). While the City of St. John's was at the head of the pack in Canada in designating historic districts, its preservation planning efforts for the heritage areas have not kept pace with the best of contemporary practice. **Investors, especially those from out-of-province, may be used to a greater level of certainty about development and planning approval in historic districts.**

As part of the current review of the St. John's Municipal Plan, it would be appropriate for the City to undertake a planning study to rationalize the current heritage area boundaries in Downtown St. John's, describe the character of the area as well as individual buildings and their attributes (often called a "heritage character statement") and detail how the area is to be managed. Such a strategy would include conservation and design guidelines, guidance for alterations to heritage resources and for the design of new infill developments.

6.9 Maintaining a Stock of Affordable Housing

In many Downtown neighbourhoods boom times have put pressure on livyers. Can they afford to stay where they are as taxes and other costs associated with property ownership rise? Will they be priced out of the market? And, if they have moved to the suburbs but want to return Downtown, will they be able to find affordable housing?

One solution to the affordability crunch is **living over the shop**. This involves encouraging the conversion of vacant upper storey space in commercial buildings to residences. In some cases, entire commercial buildings have been adaptively reused for housing. This is a well-established practice in Europe and parts of the United States, and there have been several successful initiatives in Canada as well. In addition to affordable housing benefits, this strategy provides other public policy benefits such as counteracting urban sprawl, increasing public safety downtown and making more efficient use of public infrastructure and services.

Municipalities have traditionally encouraged living over the shop (especially in heritage-type buildings) by initially amending their official plans and zoning by-laws if these discouraged or prohibited this form of mixed-use occupancy. In the United States, federal and state authorities have used income tax incentives to encourage developers to create affordable housing. In some cases, these tax incentives are combined with other income tax breaks to the same project when they involve historic preservation. Victoria's municipal planning strategy favours the notion of 'living over the shop' and, in 1998, the City approved a new tax incentive program to assist owners of Downtown heritage buildings to convert under-utilized or vacant upper storey space to residential use.

It would be appropriate for the City of St. John's to take the first step, by creating a favourable regulatory environment to encourage living over the shop. **This could help livyers stay in or return to Downtown, and provide innovative live/work units for the Downtown's thriving cultural industries.**

6.10 Capitalizing on Urban Archaeology

The economic and cultural benefits of urban archaeology are well-established internationally. Given its age and development history, Downtown St. John's also has the potential to capitalize on its below ground heritage, especially as **a tourism and public education asset**. The recent controversy over the placement of The Rooms at the Fort Townsend site highlights the importance that many City residents attach to archaeology.

It would be appropriate and desirable for the City to prepare, on the advice of its Heritage Advisory Committee and consistent with provincial legislation, an Archaeological Master Plan of the Downtown area. This would guide the City, property owners and investors in realizing opportunities for economic and other benefits from the Downtown's archaeological resources.

6.11 Building Stakeholder Cooperation

The vision proposed in this report promises more prosperity for *all* stakeholders, not just a few. However, the forward-looking strategy for the Downtown presented in this report will make new demands on the City's planning process in three areas:

1. **The adoption of a *vision* for the Downtown;**
2. **The nurturing of ongoing *partnerships* with stakeholders; and**
3. ***Consistency* in plan implementation.**

Entrenching the Vision

As outlined in Section 6.1, the adoption of a new vision for the Downtown, and a commitment to achieving such a vision, are essential to its success. This requires

- The City to act as the high-visibility **spokesperson** or "leader";
- That development decisions be made within the *context* of the vision; and
- That local partners be involved in promoting and selling this vision.

Forging True Partnerships

To achieve the vision for the Downtown, the City will need to forge close working relationships with a number of groups and organizations. As the experience in many other cities can attest to, this will require that the City

- **Recruit support from stakeholders** and their respective organizations;
- Be ***responsive*** to their concerns and input; and
- Maintain their support by assuring them that their **opinions will continue to be important**, and that the City will take into account the public's views for sustainable planning in the decision-making process.

Consistency

Once adopted, the vision must be consistently adhered to. This is particularly challenging when applicants for inappropriate development complain of hardship, and/or make promises that their development will produce wealth and jobs. The City has a duty to its stakeholders to make decisions which are consistent with the vision. This is necessary for

- Ensuring **predictability/security of investment**
- A level playing field for investors/developers

This can be accomplished by directing development away from projects that detract from, or impede the vision towards projects/areas that complement it, by promoting attractive alternatives such as (a) demonstration projects, and (b) intelligent counter-proposals. Such a process should be initiated as soon as possible, before counterproductive initiatives gain a foothold.

Three measures are recommended to build the stakeholder relationships required to successfully refine and achieve a new vision for the Downtown. These are:

- **Planning Process** - This would involve a review of the current planning process to determine if opportunities for public input need to be enhanced. One way to achieve this may be to establish neighbourhood plans/planning processes in areas where (re)development pressures currently exist or are anticipated.

- **Create a Downtown St. John's Partnership** - A new forum in which the various stakeholders can work as partners towards a more prosperous economic future. The mandate, structure and composition of this partnership - involving the City, the private sector and the community - would need to be further discussed and elaborated, but similar models from other jurisdictions could be considered.

- **Host a Downtown Summit** - If Council believes that the concept of a Downtown Partnership has political and economic merit, it might also wish to consider the possibility of forming and launching such an initiative at a Downtown Summit. This meeting of stakeholders would offer an ideal opportunity for the City to present the new Downtown Vision, to receive feedback on the recommended Strategy from the relevant stakeholders, and discuss the form and mandate of such a partnership.

6.12 Review Historic District

Council should also consider the benefits of designating the Downtown area as a separate and distinct development zone or heritage conservation and planning district. This new planning entity might be called the 'Historic City and Old Neighbourhood District'. This initiative would serve several objectives - to enhance public awareness of the special, unique nature of the City's Downtown and to raise its market profile to visitors and investors.

Although, initially, such a district need not have any formal or 'legal' status, over time it would be appropriate for the City to establish and implement the appropriate policy measures and planning/design guidelines to allow this important area to make its full contribution to the City's economy, and to its 'quality of life'. While the boundaries of this new District would need to be discussed, it is suggested that it should encompass most, if not all of the older parts of the City. The traditional Downtown area would be its centrepiece. It could incorporate (as rough boundaries) all of the area from Quidi Vidi to old Topsail Road (at Road DeLuxe) and all of the older neighbourhood areas south of a line connecting Cornwall Avenue, LeMarchant Road, Cashin Avenue and Empire Avenue, including those areas along Southside Road to Fort Amherst. It might also be appropriate to include the Churchill Park area in this District.

6.13 Links with other Cities

Finally, the City should take some comfort and assurance from the fact that other urban communities have already discovered what is achievable, and what works and what does not. The City would benefit greatly from a more in-depth study of the policies, practices, regulations and planning procedures which have been implemented and tested out in other jurisdictions. The City of St. John's, should begin building linkages, networks and exchanges with decision makers, renovation industry experts, professionals and heritage NGOs in other communities, e.g. Charleston, Saint John, Halifax and Montreal (and others). Such linkages could include study tours (by members of Council, the DDC and business leaders) or professional exchanges (City staff and local professionals), with their counterparts in these communities.

7.0 Summary of Recommendations

Previous chapters have presented broad approaches and initiatives for affecting change in Downtown St. John's. In this chapter, specific recommendations for action are summarized in the following tables.

Most recommendations are linked to specific sections of the report. Others have been suggested by the City. The table also provides recommendations about who should be responsible for implementation, and the time frame within which the action should take place. The recommendations also include a reference to the appropriate report section(s) where the background and rationale for the recommendation are discussed.

7.1 Urban Planning

Objectives	Action	Timing	Responsibility
Leadership	1. Council adopt vision for Downtown St. John's and commit to its implementation.(Section 6.1)	2001	City Council
Planning Process	2. In association with the Municipal Plan review process being undertaken this year, review the public planning process and evaluate neighbourhood plans/planning processes in neighbourhoods where there are key institutional properties and where economic (re)development is most likely to occur. (Section 6.11)	2001-02	Municipal Plan review process
	3. Establish a Downtown Partnership - involving the City, the private sector and the community to discuss Downtown development issues, monitor progress and development activity in the Downtown. (Section 5.6.3)	Fall 2001	City Economic Development Department, representatives of stakeholder groups
Planning Studies	4. In association with the Municipal Plan review process being undertaken this year, review and revise those components of the St. John's Municipal Plan which apply to the Downtown - Incorporate the "Vision" and other elements of this Strategy.	2001-02	City Engineering and Planning Department
	5. Undertake a comprehensive review of the designated Downtown heritage district - its boundaries, condition of buildings, infill opportunities and development potential. (Section 6.8)	2001-02	City Engineering and Planning Department
	6. Conduct a comprehensive viewline analysis study to identify and establish appropriate development height constraints which maximize streetscape and Harbour views. Incorporate height limits recommended by the viewline analysis into the St. John's Development Regulations. (Establish new Downtown development zones if necessary.) (Section 4.1)	2002	City Engineering and Planning Department
	7.The City and the Province works toward an Archaeological Master Plan for the Downtown. (Section 6.10)	2004	City Engineering and Planning Department, Provincial Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, Heritage Organizations

7.2 Physical Development

Objective	Action	Timing	Responsibility
Development Plans	8.Working in collaboration with the Port Authority and their current land-use management plan review, prepare and implement a plan for re-development of the St. John's Harbourfront. (Section 4.4, Section 5.6.3)	2005	City Engineering and Planning Department, with Downtown Partnership

7.3 Investment

Objective	Action	Timing	Responsibility
Remove Disincentives	9. As part of the Municipal Council's imminent review of property tax questions, consider a "tax-back" grant scheme to offset the increase in property taxes that result from renovation work, applicable to buildings over 40 years old located in the Downtown and to designated heritage buildings. (Section 6.6.2)	Fall 2001	City Finance Department, Heritage Advisory Committee and City Council
	10. Consider waiving application and building permit fees for restoration of designated commercial and institutional heritage properties. (Section 6.6.2)	Fall 2001	City Finance Department and City Council
	11. Study and demonstrate how the National Building Code (and "equivalents") can be adapted to enable the conversion of vacant or underutilized upper-floor space in commercial buildings to residential and/or office uses. (Demonstration project if possible).(Section 6.9)	2002	City Building Department
Heritage Industry Support	12. Encourage the NLHBA with the organization of an association of heritage contractors and trades. (Section 6.4)	2002	City Economic Development and Tourism Department, NLHBA
Marketing	13. Prepare a visual presentation of what the Downtown could become and market this concept directly to the corporate sector. (Section 6.2)	2002	City Building Department, Downtown Partnership

	14. Help the real estate sector launch market profiles of heritage properties for local advertising.(Section 6.3.2)	2002	City Economic Development and Tourism Department, St. John's Real Estate Board
	15. Promote successful rehabilitation projects encouraging local media to publish articles in local newspapers and magazines. (Section 6.3.2)	Immediate	City Economic Development and Tourism Department,
	16. Prepare a seminar on "Doing Business Downtown." (Section 6.5.3)	Immediate	City Economic Development and Tourism Department,

7.4 Administration

Objectives	Action	Timing	Responsibility
Administrative boundaries	17. As part of the Municipal Plan review process being undertaken this year, review the boundaries of the current Downtown Heritage District and recognize a broader portion of the City for its heritage value - such as "Historic Downtown" and surrounding "Old Neighbourhood Districts." (Section 6.12)	2002	Municipal Plan review and Heritage Advisory Committee
	18. Incorporate key elements of the St. John's Heritage Area Bylaw, 1977, into the St. John's Development Regulations.	2002	City Council, Engineering and Planning Department
Human Resources	19. Establish an Urban Design Panel to assist Council and the community in developing and implementing an urban design vision. (Section 4.5)	2002	City Engineering and Planning Department
	20. Host a "Downtown Summit" to present the Vision and Strategy for the Downtown and initiate Downtown Partnership, and to receive public input; then continue announcing different components of the overall strategy to "keep the subject in the public eye." (Section 6.11)	2002	City Council
	21. Encourage various parties in the public and private sector together to share property information and coordinate their "Real Property Asset Management Plans" for heritage buildings in the Downtown. (Section 6.3.4)	2002	City Engineering and Planning Department

Streamline Application Process	22. Streamline application processing for heritage rehabilitation projects on model of Vancouver's "Green Door" system (automatic "Urgent" sticker on heritage applications).(Section 6.6.1)	2001	City Building Department
	23. Appoint a staff facilitator or heritage officer to guide heritage building renovation applicants through the approval process. (Section 6.5.1 and Section 6.6.1)	2002	City Building Department

7.5 Information

Objectives	Action	Timing	Responsibility
Technical Information	24. In association with the Building Dept. And other expert City staff, establish a Heritage Rehabilitation Advisory Service to give owners and contractors advice on how to properly and economically rehabilitate buildings, and where to get reliable services. (Section 6.5.2, Section 6.5.3)	2002	City Building Department, Engineering and Planning Department
	25. In consultation with the Heritage Advisory Committee, prepare public information materials on regulatory heritage preservation measures (bylaws, design guidelines etc.) (Section 6.8)	2003	Heritage Advisory Committee, City Engineering and Planning Department
	26. In consultation with the Heritage Advisory Committee, prepare public information materials on "How To" aspects of heritage rehabilitation. (Section 6.5)	2002	Heritage Advisory Committee, City Building Department
Training	27. Organize training sessions for facilities managers, heritage building owners, developers and loans officers on the economic benefits and current technologies of heritage rehabilitation.(Section 6.5.3)	2003	NLHBA, CMHC, City Building Department, City Department of Economic Development and Tourism
Research	28. Review and update comprehensive inventory of Downtown heritage properties, including a consolidation of existing federal, provincial and municipal data.(Section 6.8)	2003	City Engineering and Planning Department

Exchange	29. Organize and encourage linkages with other "Heritage" Cities through study tours and exchanges including staff, Council members, industry experts and the business community. (Section 6.13)	2003	City Economic Development and Tourism Department